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K. CHOCKALINGAM
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A view of the Darga at Nagore (from the Sea-shore). ... 441

The Golden Doors of Nagore Andavar Sannathi, Nagore. 441

The box containing the Cap, Stick and other articles which were used by Nagore Andavar, Nagore. ... 440

TEMPLES OF
THANJAVUR DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

South India is said to be a piece of ancient India preserved in its original form without the devastations that visited other parts of India during alien invasions and other internecine campaigns. Thanjavur district situated in the delta of Cauvery river traditionally called the granary of the South was the seat of the power of the Chola Empire. Consequently, Thanjavur district is a place of concentration of a large number of ancient and interesting Hindu temples. Reckoning only the well-known and important temples in Tamil Nadu, there are 10,542 temples spread over the fourteen districts. Of these, there are 1,809 temples in Thanjavur district alone. For this survey, we have selected 277 important temples in Thanjavur district. Twenty-four of these 1,809 belong to the Pallava period while four hundred of them came into being during the reign of the Cholas and the Naiks. Of these, not less than thirty-six are more than two thousand years old.

The following statement gives the number of temples dedicated to Siva. Vishnu, Murugar, Vinayagar, etc.

TEMPLES

Presiding deities	Under the H.R. & C.E. (A) Dept.	Under the Dharmapura Adheenam	Under the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam	Outside the H.R. & C.E. (A) Dept.	Total
Siva	827	21	15	51	914
Vishnu	401	—	1	24	426
Murugar	52	...	...	5	57
Grama Devadas	154	...	...	19	173
Vinayagar	112	...	...	15	127
Other deities	104	...	...	8	112
Total	1,650	21	16	122	1,809

Most of these temples have been richly endowed. The mainstay of their income is from their landed property. The following table gives the details of income of various temples from immovable properties :

Annual income	TEMPLES				
	Under the H.R. & C.E. (A) Dept.	Under the Dharmapura Adheenam	Under the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam	Outside the H.R. & C.E. (A) Dept.	Total
Rs.					
500 & below	447	...	...	84	531
501 - 1,000	394	...	...	23	417
1,001 - 5,000	546	5	5	12	568
5,001 - 10,000	113	1	3	2	119
10,001 - 50,000	127	8	5	...	140
50,001 - 100,000	16	...	1	1	18
Above one lakh	7	7	2	...	16
Total	1,650	21	16	122	1,809

Several temples have noteworthy collections of jewellery. The following table gives details of the value of jewellery possessed by the temples :

Annual income	TEMPLES				
	Under the H.R. & C.E. (A) Dept.	Under the Dharmapura Adheenam	Under the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam	Outside the H.R.& C.E. (A) Dept.	Total.
Rs.					
500 & below	366	1	6	20	393
501 - 1,000	107	...	...	...	107
1,001 - 5,000	106	1	2	6	115
5,001 - 10,000	29	1	...	1	31
10,001 - 50,000	46	6	4	1	57
50,001 - 100,000	9	3	...	...	12
100,001 - 500,000	17	4	3	...	24
500,001 - 10,00,000	...	...	...	...	...
Above 10 lakhs	...	1	...	...	1
Total	680	17	15	28	740

The Value of jewellery in twenty-four temples in the district exceeds Rs. 1,00,000 each. The value of jewellery in Sri Vaidhyanadhaswamy Temple in Vaitheeswaran Koil in Sirkali Taluk is estimated to be about Rs. 10,56,000.

Age of Temples: Generally, inscriptions on temples do not refer to the period of construction of temples. We have to assess their age roughly by the style of construction and reference made in the inscriptions to other events or Kings.

In the most ancient Tamil classic of *Tholkappiam*, there is practically no reference to the existence or about the type of construction of temples. The only reference which we come across about the religious aspect of ancient Tamil culture is that every type of land is associated with a particular God. For instance, Murugar is said to be the Lord of Hilly tracts. Indra is said to be the Lord of fertile tracts like Thanjavur district and Varuna (God of rain) is associated with *Neithal* (sea and lands adjoining the sea). Apart from these references, there is no reference to any temple being constructed for these Gods. That Indra was the God of Cauvery Delta is confirmed by the fact that *Silappathikaram* refers to the Indra festival in Kaveripatnam. Later Sangam classics refer to Gods as the "Deity under the Banyan Tree" or "Deity under the Tree" Perhaps, in those days, the shrines were located right under the spreading Banyan Trees. Even now we find some village shrines. under Banyan Trees or under other big trees of the village. Possibly this is the survival of the ancient custom. The most ancient temple covered under this survey seems to be the one in Kaveripatnam where, according to *Silappathikaram*, both Kannagi and Madhavi worshipped. This temple is constructed with brick and mortar and is on a modest dimension compared with the large temples of the later Cholas. It seems that in Pallava period, constructions of large temples started. The style got more refined during the Chola rule and it became highly ornamental in the days of Vijayanagar Empire.

There are references in *Silappathikaram* to temples' big towers piercing the clouds indicating that even about two thousand years ago, there were huge temples with tall gopurams, but those temples have not remained unaltered all these ages. Successive renovations, have completely obliterated the original construction, as a result of which, it is difficult to distinguish the ancient from the later

additions. Perhaps, the exterior alone is modern while the foundation or the inner core of the wall is ancient as claimed by traditions.

In recorded history, it is the Pallavas who were the first great temple-builders. Even though there were not many specimens of Pallava temples in the original form in Thanjavur district, in the temple of Pallavaneswaram in Kaveripatnam, one with a studious eye can discern some bits here and there left out of Pallava architecture. With the advent of Chola suzerainty in Thanjavur district, a bold and impressive style emerged and we could see the Chola style distinctly in Bragadheeswarar Temple at Thanjavur. It was a mature style with an integrated conception of a temple. When Chola suzerainty was supplanted by Pandyas the same style was more or less continued with perhaps, the gopurams being taller in the later period. In the succeeding Vijayanagar rule, large-scale construction of temples was again undertaken and it was in this period that all the temples, vimanas, gopurams etc., were made extravagant products of ornamentation. No doubt the ornamentations are exquisitely beautiful.

In the transition of style from the Chola to the Vijayanagar period, the temple of Darasuram is a landmark. Compared to the gopurams of the Pandya period, there is a definite change not only in architectural treatment, but also in other aspects. This temple denotes that there was a change away from the relatively robust and disciplined productions of the Pallavas and Cholas towards a richer and more elegant style. It points to an animated style with a fresh spirit not only in the idea of giving it larger power of expression, but with the object of attracting the attention by raising its emotional appeal. Hence the temple at Darasuram illustrates the midway of architectural development in the South, marking a stage of transition between the affluent maturity of the Chola and the exquisite though extravagant productions of Vijayanagar.

The intricacy and rich beauty of the Vijayanagar type of temple is as a result of the number and prominence of its pillars and spheres and the way that have all been sculptured to fit into an integrated figurative drama in stone. Pavillions containing hundreds of pillars form the principal type of architectural scheme. These impressive pillars form the central theme. The most frequent feature is that in which the shaft becomes merely a central core for the attachment of the involved group of statutory, often of heroic size and chiselled entirely in the ground having as its most conspicuous element of a furiously rearing horse, rampant hippogryph or an upraised animal of a supernatural kind.

Vijayanagar Empire came to an abrupt end in the year 1565. Subsequently, Muslim rule spread down into the South. During this period, it was the Nayak rulers of Madurai that held sway over Thanjavur district also. The Nayak rulers have contributed to the construction and maintenance of temples in Thanjavur district. The noteworthy specimen of the architecture of their period is in the temple at Thiruvarur. During their period, ornamentation reached its peak; the vimanas and the gopuras along with the pillars were all richly decorated. What strikes one is that with all the abundance of rich decorations, the architect has been able to maintain a theme of integrated aesthetic imagination. Another example of the style of architecture is the Subramanya shrine inside the Bragadheeswarar Temple at Thanjavur. The Subramanya Temple was constructed in the Seventeenth Century. The style of construction and the method of decoration are conspicuously different from the mature majesty of construction and execution of the main temple of Bragadheeswarar.

A brief reference to the style of temple architecture in South India and how it evolved over the ages would, I think, be helpful to the beginner to appreciate the work of art in the temples covered in this book.

According to Dubruel, a French authority on the subject, the outstanding characteristics of South Indian architecture are:

(1) It is ancient.

(2) It has remained isolated, uninfluenced by the development of architecture in other areas of the world.

(3) It has evolved over the ages without external influence.

This state is not entirely due to the non-availability of communications in the ancient times. Even when the South Indian architect had opportunities of going to other parts of the world during the Chola Empire, he held fast to his own ways of architecture. Every chief mason was an institution by himself and he stuck to his motifs which his ancestors had transmitted to him. Thus, we find Dravidian art presenting a rare picture of an architecture which remained isolated for more than Thirteen Centuries borrowing nothing from foreign arts, but the art varied continuously on the path of natural evolution in such a way that one could follow its modifications from one century to the other. It is possible to find out in the ancient Dravidian monuments the origin of all motifs of ornamentation which characterise the modern style, but on the whole, Dravidian art has changed by itself rather than through the influence of other styles.

Dubruel considers that in South Indian architecture, there is not much of engineering interest. He thinks that the big temples and tall towers are but mere heaps of stones. Nature had granted the South Indian architect huge granite stones with which he could construct extensive mandapams and large vimanams and tall towers. No doubt this view cannot be sustained when we remember that in India with very archaic methods of construction, they were able to lift stones as big as eighty tons (Thanjavur temple) over a height of two hundred and sixteen feet to the top of the Vimanam in Bragadheeswarar Temple. When we see the hollow structure of Thanjavur Big Temple we cannot accept

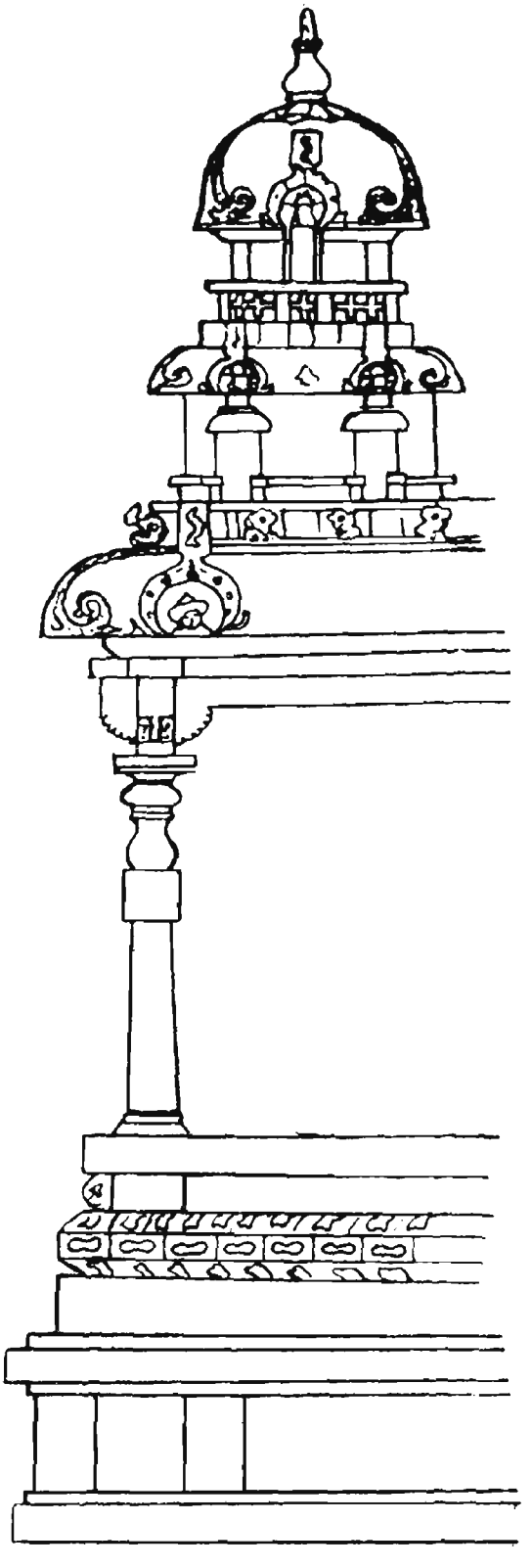
the view of Dubruel that there is not much of engineering in this architecture. The Europeans had to use small pieces of building material in constructing huge structures. Hence they had to evolve details of joints and structure which would enable the construction of impressive large structures with the help of tiny pieces of bricks. Merely because the South Indian architect had the advantage of having huge granite rocks and pillars, it cannot be stated that it was easy for him to construct huge temples — may be he was not compelled to evolve different structures and shapes. The very fact that he erected the pillars and constructed the towers and carried huge stones over such a height of two hundred and sixteen feet—with the poor machinery at his command in those days is ample proof that engineering ability was not an insignificant part in South Indian architecture.

The South Indian architecture can be roughly divided into periods of :—

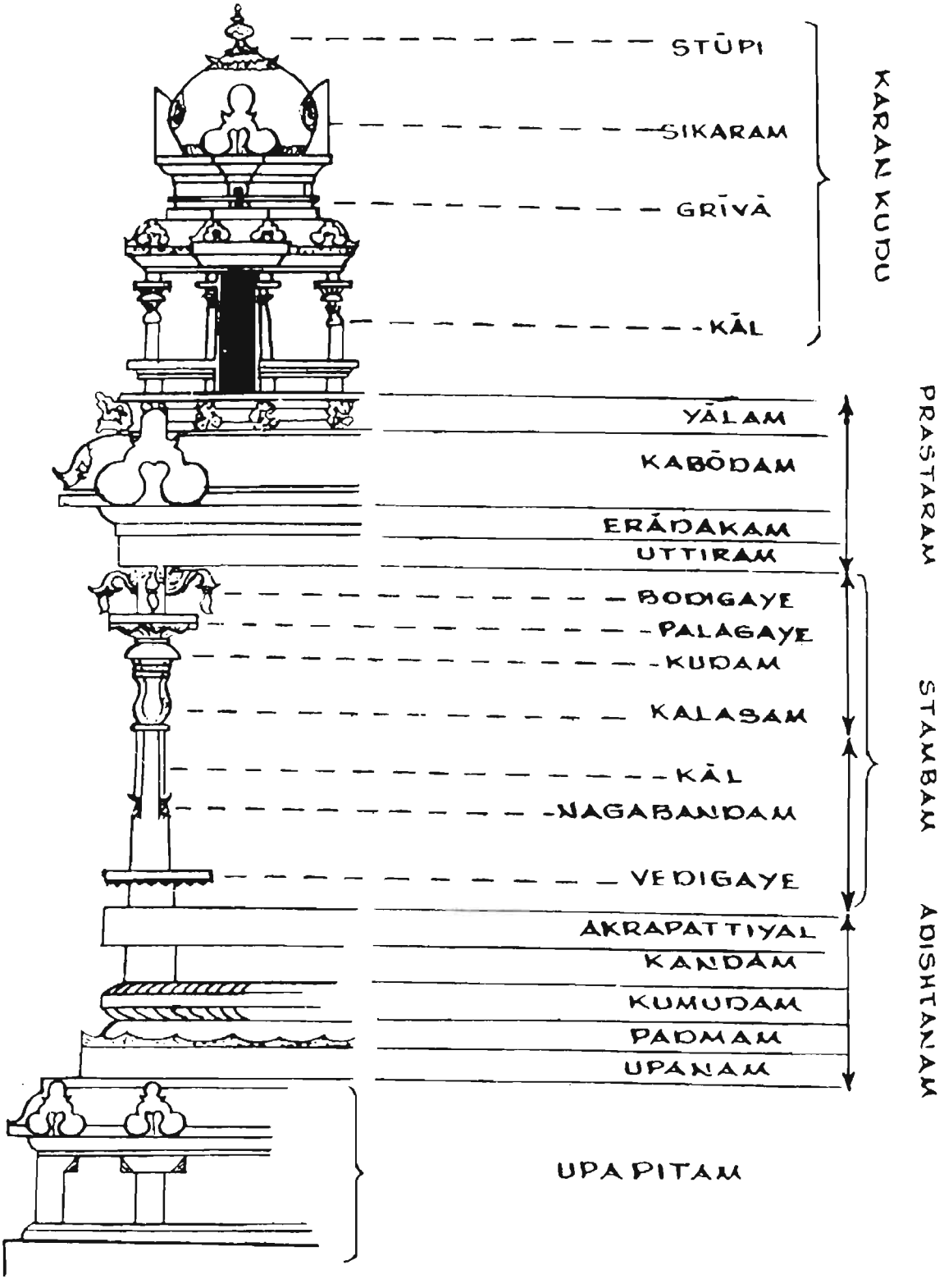
1. Pallava architecture (600-850 A.D.)
2. Early Chola architecture (850-1100 A.D.)
3. Later Chola architecture (1100-1350 A.D.)
4. Vijayanagar epoch (1350-1600 A.D.)
5. Modern epoch (1600 A.D. till to day)

The difference in motifs between the most ancient and the most modern temples are in details only. The motifs of all ornamentations are not equally evolved. In the same space of time certain part of an edifice has changed very much while others have not changed in form. In order to ascertain the age of a monument with some approximation, it is necessary to examine particularly the motifs which have evolved in a very characteristic manner. It is the study of these transformations which will enable us to place a particular work or to fix the age of a particular work.

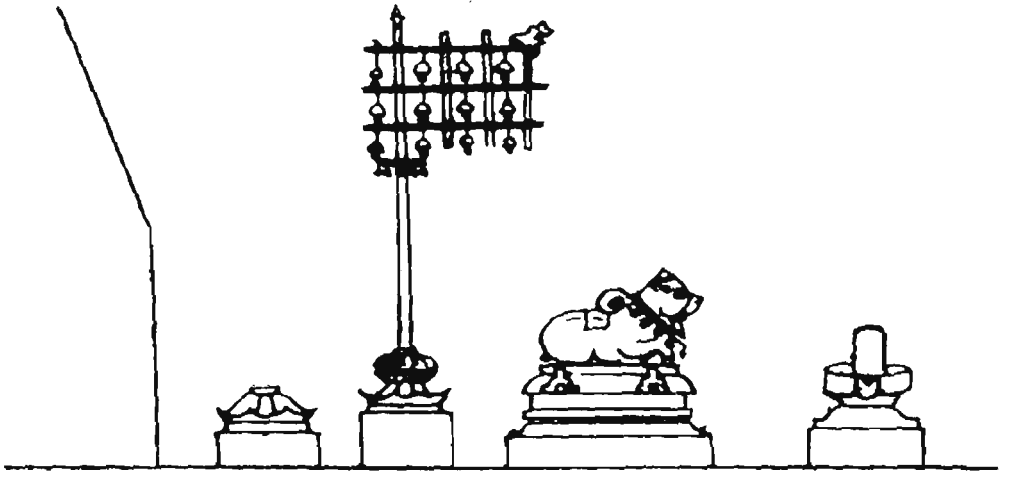
TRACINGS FROM
DRAVIDIAN ARCHITECTURE
BY
DUBRUEL



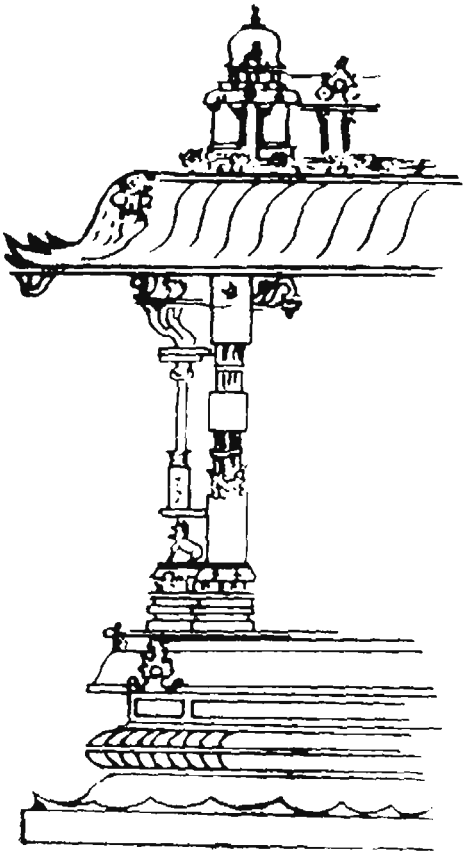
PALLAVA



MODERN DRAVIDIAN ORDER.

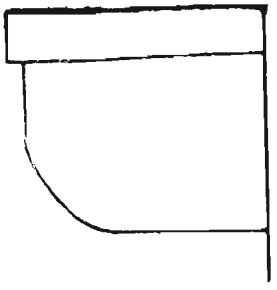


GOPURAM. BALIPITAM. DWAJAS-TAMBHAM NANDHI. LINGAM.

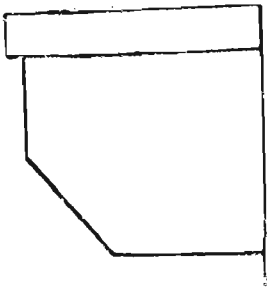


KODUNGAI

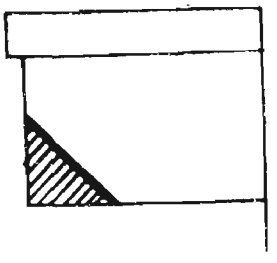
MANTAPAM



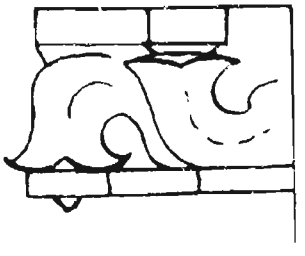
PALLAVA A.D. 600 To 850.



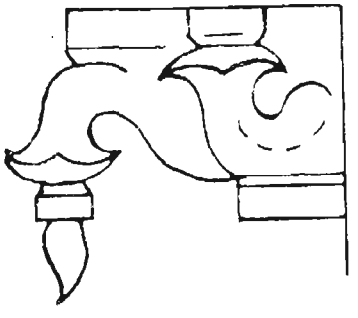
EARLY CHOLA A.D. 850 To 1100.



LATER CHOLA A.D. 1100 TO 1350.

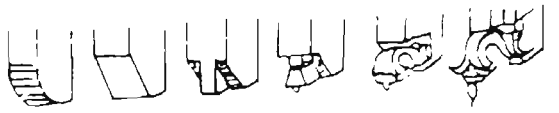


VIJAYANAGAR A.D 1350 To 1600.



MODERN

CORBELS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DIFFERENT PERIODS.



EVOLUTION OF THE CORBEL [VIEW OF THREE QUARTERS]

PALLAVA

SĀDĀ BŌDIGAI

EARLY CHOLA

TARANGU BŌDIGAI

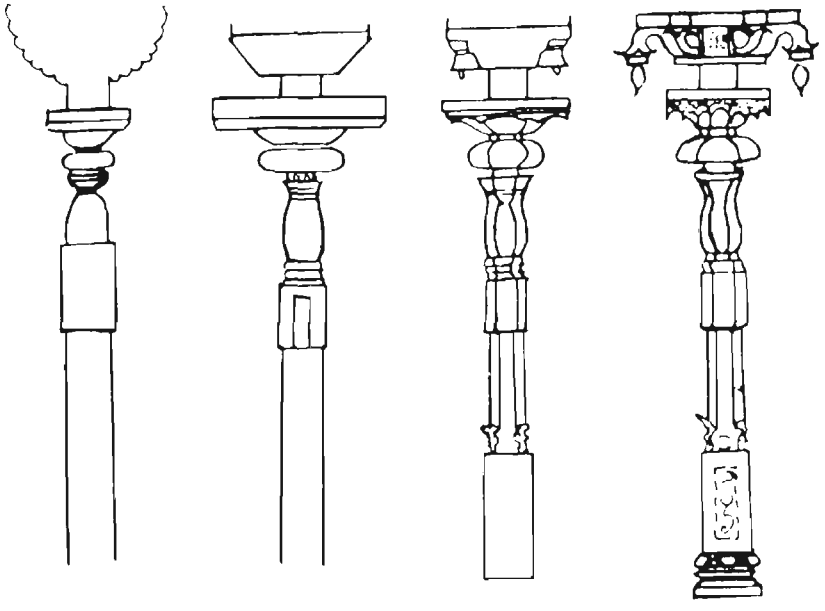
LATER CHOLA

VIJAYANAGAR

PUSHPA BŌDIGAI

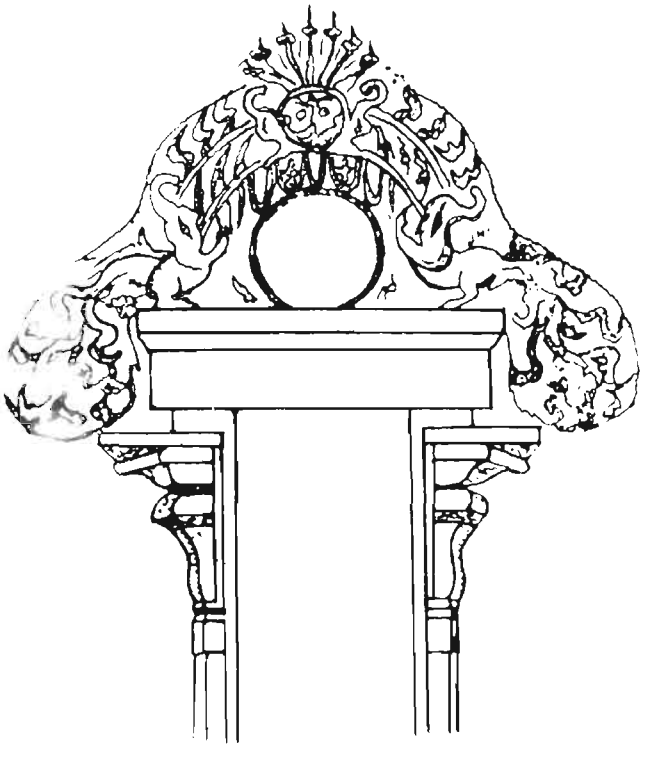
MODERN

HISTORY OF THE BŌDIGAI

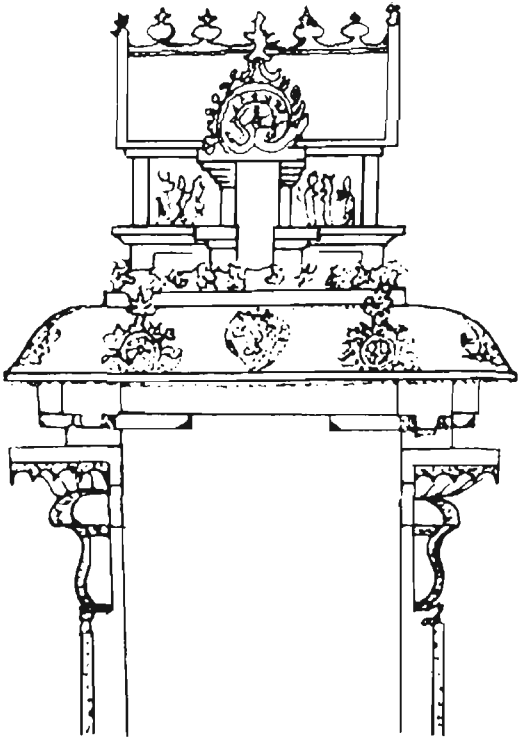


600 A.D 1000 A.D 1350 A.D. 1650 A.D.

EVOLUTION OF THE PILLAR WITH BULBONS CAPITAL

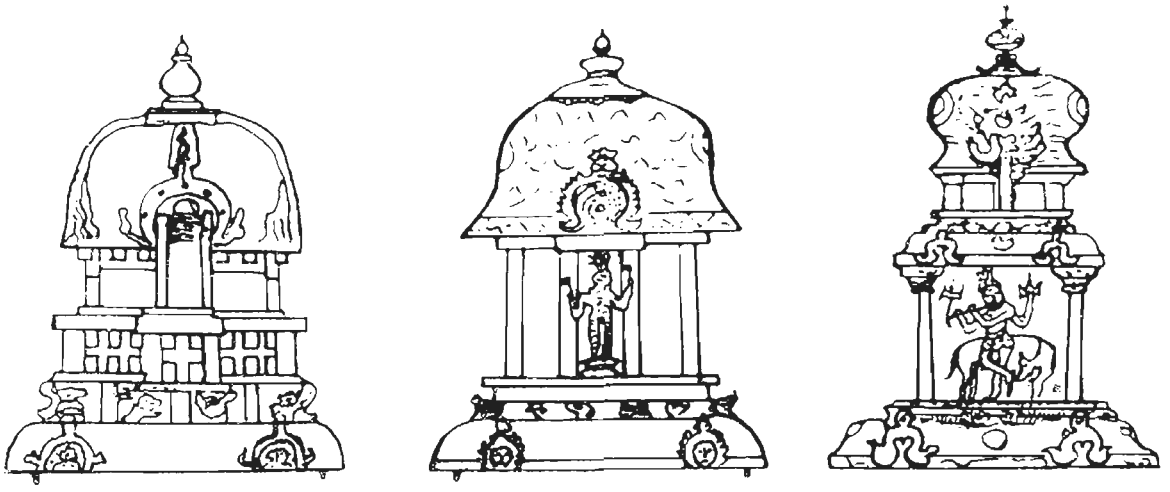


EARLY CHOLA



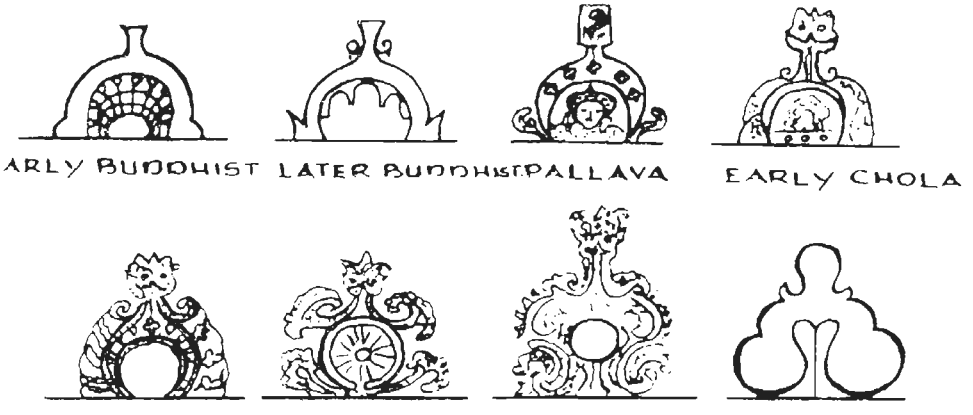
LATER CHOLA

EVOLUTION OF THE NICHE



PALLAVA LATER CHOLA VIJAYANAGAR

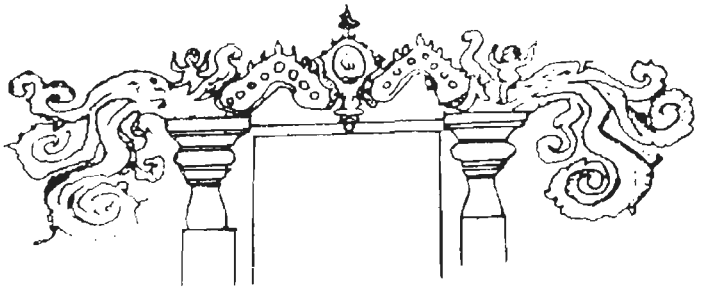
EVOLUTION OF THE PAVILION



EARLY BUDDHIST LATER BUDDHIST PALLAVA EARLY CHOLA

LATER CHOLA PANDYA VIJAYANAGAR MODERN

EVOLUATION OF THE KUDU



PALLAVA

Even though there is a pattern of motifs in all the accepted terms of temple construction, it is a common experience that we come across temples of not only various designs of construction, but some temples conforming to no design at all. One observer goes to the extent of saying that Indian construction suffers from a fatal inability to conform to an organised plan. For instance, in the huge temple at Thiruvarur, the original nucleus of the temple is only the sanctum sanctorum which was probably a village temple prior to Thiruvarur becoming the Chola capital. Around this inner sanctum, in later ages, temples of various sizes have sprung up. Perhaps, every conquering Chola king on his return from the triumphal conquests, as a measure of his devotion and perhaps in return to his prayers answered, constructed a shrine depending perhaps on the size of the conquest he made. The result of such unplanned construction is the conglomerate of several temples of different sizes without conforming to a master-plan. But this sort of haphazard growth is found only in temples at the metropolitan cities of Cholas. In all other temples, there is a plan discernible and in all probability the temple was planned on the lines which we find it now as constructed.

If we study the gopuras of the various temples, we are able to discern certain styles and patterns. In the Pallava period, temples were not very tall and they have not been ornamented to the same degree that we come across in the later ages. It was the Cholas who started construction of tall towers. We are all familiar with the common architecture of our towers and how it differs from the style of North Indian temples. Our towers are in horizontal layers as opposed to the vertical style common in North Indian temples. The older the gopuras, the less ornate they are. As we approach the modern times, ornamentation is more intense, more intricate and more satisfying in aesthetic patterns.

Most of the temples carry inscriptions on their walls. Even though those inscriptions refer only to gift of property to the temple, they throw a great deal of light on the age of the temple. In one temple even the gift of a small lamp is inscribed. We need not take the age of inscriptions to be

literally the age of the temple. It is possible that during renovations old walls were pulled down and new ones constructed in which case we would only see the latest wall. The inscriptions need not necessarily mean the period of construction of the temple. Even though South India escaped the ravage of demolition of temples during campaigns and foreign invasions, periodic renovations of the temples have intervened and masqueraded what was the original temple. That is how we find some temples of recent architecture, even though the local traditions claim the age of the temple to be over 2,000 years. Probably, the local tradition is right and the temple is over 2,000 years of age and what we see today is not perhaps the old temple but the result of the growth of the old temple over a period of centuries. That would perhaps explain the contradiction between the local belief and what we find on the basis of the architectural tradition.

Dubruel mentions that South Indian architecture has remained static without borrowing from any other style, probably due to the fact that South India being remote from the main stream of historic events of this country got out of the way and so remained solitary. It is difficult to reconcile this observation with the fact that Cholas who extended their empire into Java and Sumatra and thereby came into contact with the development of Hindu architecture in those areas did not think it fit to copy them. The Hindu shrine at Bokur-Bodur and at Ankor-Vat(Siam) are outstanding examples of Hindu sculpture. In fact it is said that the temple at Bokur-Bodur is so outstanding in construction that it is difficult to come across a similar temple elsewhere either in India or any other country that came under the influence of Hindu sculpture. Similarly, the temple at Ankor-Vat has been constructed with such rich imagination that one would be tempted to copy at least some of its styles. But the fact remains that even though the Cholas came into contact with these temples which were the developments of Hindu architecture, they did not choose to copy them; probably this is due to the fact that they felt that the South Indian style of architecture was superior in construction and execution, and that there was no need to copy from

other styles. If they had felt that the temples in Java had nothing to teach them, it might perhaps be due not only to the sense of imperial pride, but also due to the fact that the temples of Cholas were more durable that they stood the test of time, whereas the temples of Java which were constructed in stone alone without the use of lime mortar just like the Big Temple at Thanjavur have crumbled into ruins.

JAINISM

It is well known that Jainism spread over Tamil Nadu and commanded a large following in the second millennium. Their missionaries played a big role in the spread of education to ordinary people and to render in Tamil what was in those days considered literary wisdom meant exclusively for the learned.

The Jains have written several outstanding Tamil works like *Tholkappiam, Naladiar* and *Silappathikaram.* It is also well known that the Jains were idol worshippers just like the Hindus. They also constructed temples for their deities and they were also known to erect statues of Mahavira. Such Temples and statues are in large numbers in North India. But surprisingly in Tamil Nadu we do not come across many Jain shrines or statues erected by Jains.

The following are the places where Jain shrines and statues are in existence in Thanjavur district.

Thanjavur,

Karunthattangudi,

Kumbakonam,

Mannargudi,

Deepangudi,

Vedharanyam.

Photographs of these relics which are included in this volume may bring to the notice of the public the existence of these temples and may help to kindle the interest of people to know more about them.

Buddhism

There are many references to Buddhism and Buddhist Monks in ancient Tamil literature. Surprisingly there are no surviving Buddhist temples in Thanjavur district. The only relics of the religion which was once spread all over Tamil Nadu are a few statues of Buddha and Bodhisathva that we come across in Thanjavur district. There are a few bronze icons of Buddha : The statues of Buddha found in Melaiyur (Kaveripattinam) in Sirkali Taluk, Madagaram in Thanjavur Taluk, Thiruvalanchuli in Kumbakonam Taluk, Elayur in Thanjavur Taluk, Manambady in Thanjavur Taluk and the bronze statues at Nagapattinam. There is a sculpture about an event in Buddha's life on the walls of the Bragadheeswarar Temple in Thanjavur which goes to show that in the days of the Cholas, Buddhism was not considered alien to Hindu faith. The bronze statue of Bodhisathva found at Nagapattinam is of Twelfth Century A. D. This bronze piece is now in the Madras Museum, where there is also another bronze piece of Buddha which is of the Eleventh Century A. D.

The orthodox form of Buddhism seems to have survived in Thanjavur district in ages much later than it became comparatively extinct in North India. This view is supported by the fact that there are several images of Buddha of the Chola period-faces in rectangular shape. The recent excavations in Kaveripattinam of Buddhist monastery and bronze images from Nagapattinam also indicate that Buddhism was a live force in South India even when it had disappeared in the North. We find the images of Buddha in Melaiyur, Madagaram, Thiruvalanchuli and Elayur in Thanjavur district and also inscriptions in copper plates carved during the period of Sundara Chola. These plates come from a place very near Vedharanyam, probably the original grant must have pertained to a place near Vedharanyam and Kodikkarai.

From Nagapattinam, about 350 Buddhist bronzes of the Mahayana School were recovered from Vihara sites raised by

the Sailendras or Sumatra in the time of Chola kings Raja Raja-I and Rajendra Chola-I. They belong to early Chola period (871-1070 A. D.) and a large number of the rest to the later Chola period i.e., (1070-1250 A. D.). A large number of these South Indian bronzes have been cast, solid the pedestal alone cast hollow.

The majority of South Indian metal images are made of copper with a small admixture of alloys. It does not seem to be correct to describe them as bronze. According to the Silpasastra and tradition, they should be made of Panchalogas i.e., an alloy of five metals-copper, silver, gold, tin and lead.

INSCRIPTIONS

An attempt has been made in this volume to give brief descriptions of the inscriptions found on the walls of various temples. Most of the inscriptions which belong to the Chola or later period are found in Tamil letters and they refer to minor events like gift of some lands to the temple or institution of a charity in the temple etc. There are, of course, some older inscriptions which are in Brahmi script. References have been made to the sources of these inscriptions, so that students of architecture could study them further.

SIRKALI TALUK

MAHENDRAPALLI

Sri Thirumeni Azhageswarar Temple

Mahendrapalli otherwise known as Koiladipalayam lies at a distance of about seven kilometres north-east of the village of Achalpuram. It is a Panchayat village having a population of 1,882. It is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Thirumeni Azhageswarar.

The temple which faces east covers an area of about sixty eight cents. It has a single prakaram and two sanctums, one for the God and the other for the Goddess. It is said that the temple is an ancient one. Renovations were made about twenty years back.

The presiding deity is an installed Lingam. The divine consort here is known as Vadivambigai. Legend has it that this sacred sthalam was once worshipped by Devendra and thus came to be known as Mahendrapalli. It is also said that Brahma, Surya and Chandra had worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. The reputed Saints Sambandhar and Arunagirinathar have glorified this sthalam in their hymns.

Poojas are performed four times daily by a non-hereditary priest who is paid a monthly salary from the temple revenues.

The gold and silver ornaments in the temple are worth about Rs. 300 of which the golden Thirumangalyam of the Amman deserves special mention. The temple owns about 8·03 acres of wet and 2·82 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,900 by way of rent. This amount is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are three vahanas here, viz., bull, peacock and horse all made of wood.

Thiruvadhirai is the only important festival celebrated by the temple.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

ACHALPURAM

Sri Sivaloga Thyagarajaswamy Temple

On the southern bank of the Coleroon about ten miles north-east of Sirkali lies the village of Achalpuram. It is famous for its ancient Siva temple which is situated in the heart of the village. There is bus service between Achalpuram and Sirkali and also to Coleroon. The railway station on the Madras-Trichy main line is about four miles away. It has a population of 3,087.

The temple covers an area of about one acre and has a fifty feet high Rajagopuram in the front. There are two prakarams and sanctum sanctorum with fifty artistically carved granite pillars. There is a separate shrine for Sri Thirugnanasambandhar and his consort Thotrapurani Ammai in the hundred pillar mandapam.

Achalpuram is also known by several other names such as Sivalogam, Nallur, Thirumanaivi and Mukthipuram each with its own legend. As Sri Thirugnanasambandhar got married and attained Mukthi here, it came to be

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1. Sivaloganathaswamy (Moolavar)
2. Chandikeswarar Sannadhi
3. Arthamandapam
4. Natarajar Sannadhi
5. Kalyanamandapam
6. Suriyan
7. Madapalli
8. Somaskandhar
9. Arumugaswamy
10. Gajalakshmi
11. Palliarai
12. Vinayagar
13. Balasubramaniar
14. Sthalaviruksham & Panchalingamedai
15. Brahmalingam
16. Chokkanayagiamman
17. Garden
18. Yagasalai
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20. Vasanthamandapam
21. Thirunalaipovar Sannadhi
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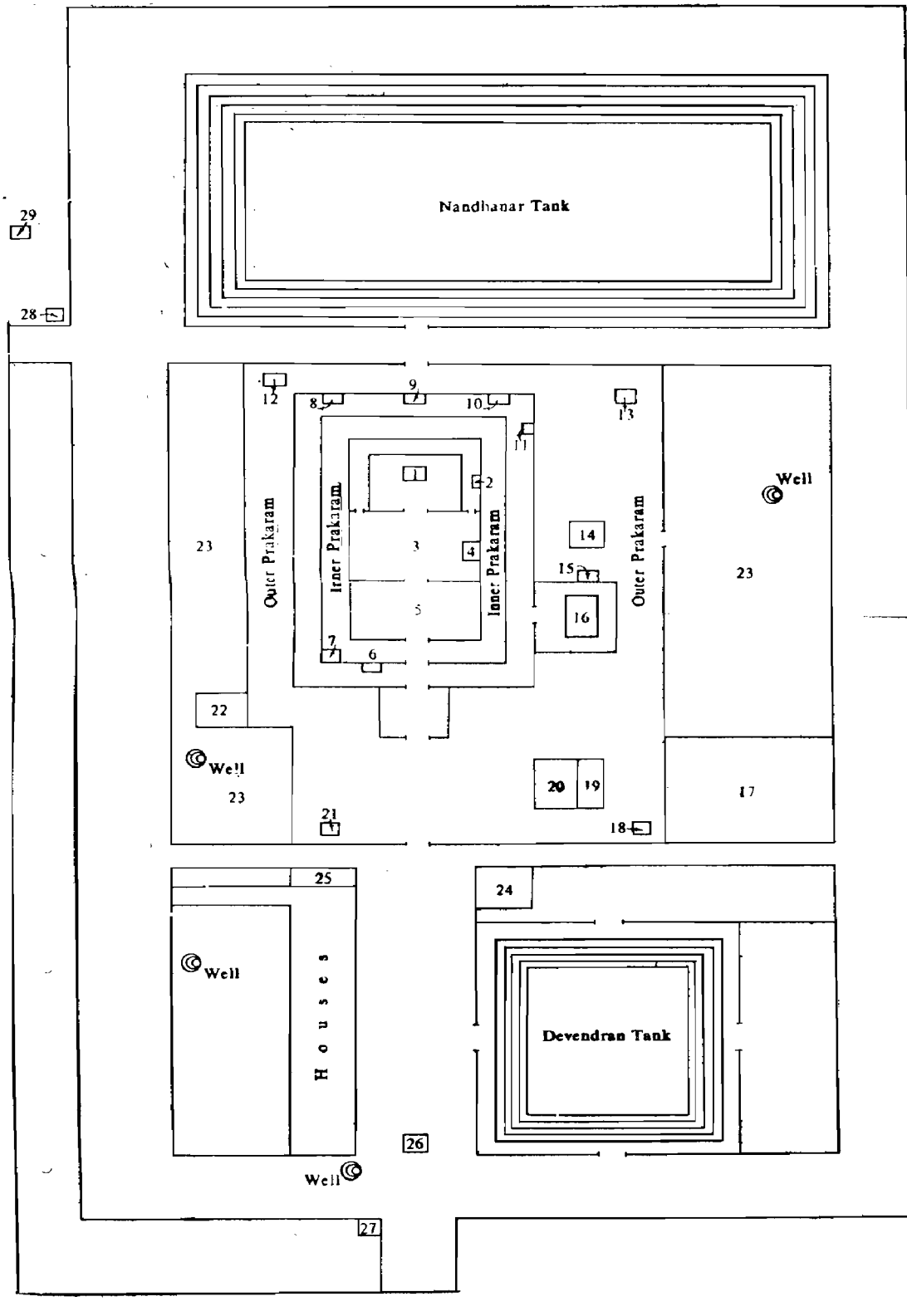
27. Temple Car Shed
28. Mariamman Kovil
29. Ayyanar Kovil

SRI SIVALOGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

ACHALPURAM

(Not to Scale)



known as Achalpuram ('Achal' means 'wife' in Tamil) Thirumanaivi ('Manaivi'-wife) and Mukthipuram. As the Lord is believed to have blessed at this place Sage Vasishta, Kakamamunivar and others by showing the path to Sivalogam, it is known as Sivalogam and as it is considered a good pilgrim centre, it also came to be called Nallur. Besides, it is also said that Lord Muruga, Sage Brigu, Parasarar, Viswamithirar, Jamadagni, Aswar, Athiri, Durvasar, Vyasar, Mirugandu, Gangai and Agasthyar had visited this place, offered worship and attained salvation by the grace of the Lord.

Several Theerthams, viz., Panchakshara Theertham, Brigu Theertham, Aswa Theertham, Vasishta Theertham, Athiri Theertham, Vyasa Theertham, Mirukandu Theertham, Agasthya Theertham and Jamadagni Theerthem are here of which the Panchakshara Theertham is the most famous. The holy Vilva tree is the Sthala Viruksham. There are two small shrines for Sri Vinayagar, one in the south-west and the other in north-west corner of the temple. There are also several stone inscriptions here on the walls of the inner and outer prakarams belonging to the periods of Chola Kings, Vikrama Chola (1120 - 1135 A.D.), Kulothunga III (1179-1211 A.D.), Raja Raja III (1216-1246 A.D.) and the Pandya King Maravarman Parakrama Pandyan. They refer to the Lord of this sthalam as Sri Kailasamudaiyar, Thiruperu Manamudaiya Mahadevar and Thiruperumanamudaiya Nayanar and the Ambal as Sri Thirukama Kottamudaiya Nachiar.

The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Sivaloga Thyagarajaswamy is in the form of a Swayambu Lingam, facing east. Situated in a separate sanctum is His consort Sri Thiruvenneetru Ammai who also faces east. Sri Mavadi Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Arubathimoovar, Appar, Sundarar, Sambandhar, Sundareswarar, Bhukailasanathar, Naganathar, Viswanathar, Mathrubhootheswarar, Suryar, Chandrar, Bairavar, Saneeswarar and Durgai are the other deities here. There are also several bronze idols here of Siva, Ambal, Somaskandhar, Lakshmi, Vinayagar, Subramaniar

and Chandrasekarar, all made of Panchalogam. It is said that the Saints Appar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have visited this shrine and composed several sacred *padhigams* (verses) in praise of the Lord. The Sthala Puranam of this temple was published by Sri Sivakkolundhu Desigar of Kottaiyur and it contains 531 verses.

Poojas are performed six times daily by hereditary Brahmin priests according to the Karana and Kamika Agamas. The ancient gold and silver ornaments in the temple are worth over Rs. 13,000 of which the golden Kasumalai and Thirumangalyam of the Amman and the silver kavacham of the Swamy deserve special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 34·39 acres of wet and 45·22 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 44,000 by way of rent; this sum is utilised towards pay of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The temple owns a big car which is in a state of disrepair, apart from five palanquins, all made of wood.

Navarathri, Skandha Sashti and Saint Thirugnana-sambandhar's Thirukalyanam in Vaikasi for a period of ten days are the regular festivals celebrated here of which the last one is the most important which attracts thousands of devotees.

The shrine is associated with the reputed Saivite Saint Thirugnanasambandhar. The legend is that after getting married to Sri Thotrapurani Ammai, the Saint prayed at this shrine and was transported to Heaven. A largely attended festival is held in the month of Vaikasi to commemorate the marriage. According to another popular legend, King Manthatha too had offered worship in this shrine and had his prayers granted. The sacred fountain of Panchakshara Theertham that sprang out of the spear thrust by Sivaloga Thyagar is said to have divine powers.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheena-kartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam, the Trustee of the temple.

The village is also of historical importance. It was the scene of fierce fighting during the early wars of the English in this district. After seizing Devicottah in 1,744 the British soldiers resolved to take possession of the nearby temple of Achalpuram. Accordingly, a big contingent marched towards the shrine. There was no resistance from the priests in charge of the temple. They only entreated the soldiers not to desecrate the holy place. The Tanjore army was, however, enraged at the "pollution" and retaliated in vain. The temple was again occupied by the English in 1759 and shortly afterwards by the French.

INSCRIPTIONS

KINGS REPRESENTED : The earliest king to be represented in inscriptions is Raja Raja I (985-1016 A. D.) and the latest king to be represented is the Mahratta Ruler Ekoji (1676-1683 A. D.)

The following kings are represented:
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A. D.)
Vikrama Chola (1120-1135 A. D.)
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Kulothunga III (1179-1211 A. D.) also known as Tribhuvanaviradeva.
Raja Raja III (1216-1246 A. D.)
Maravarman Parakrama Pandya.
Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1270 A. D.) & Mahratta Ruler, Ekoji

Since the inscription of Raja Raja is in fragments, and inscriptions dating only from the reign of Vikrama Chola are found intact, it is evident that the earlier epigraphs have disappeared. The temple might have undergone some renovation before the time of Vikrama Chola.

VILLAGE : The village is called Nallur in Vennaiurnadu, a sub-division of Rajadhi Raja Valanadu. Besides Nallur, a

few villages in and around Nallur where lands were gifted are also mentioned in inscriptions as the salt-pans at Mahipalakulakala Peralam, Edirisolanallur, Panchavanmadevi alias Kulothunga Chola Chaturvedimangalam, Thirupperumana Nallur, Tribhuvana Viramangalam, Sattamangalam alias Sivacharana Sekharanallur, Nagarisurapperalam of Nallur and Parakrama Chola Chaturvedimangalam.

THE SHRINES : The main deity is called Nallur Thirupperumanamudaiya Mahadeva in all early inscriptions. However, in the late epigraph of the Mahratta ruler Ekoji, Saka 1605 (1683 A. D.), the deity is called Sivaloga Thyagar. The shrine of the Goddess Kamakkottamudaiya Peria Nachiyar was constructed by a certain Chandrasekharan alias Panchanadi Vanan, a headman of Nerkunram (near Madras) in Puliyur Kottam in the reign of Kulothunga III (Thirty second year.) During the reign of the same king, the shrine of Aludaiya Pillaiyar (Thirugnanasambandhar) is referred to for which a flower garden was provided by a resident of Abhaiyamanikkacheri in the same village.

Since the first prakara wall carries the inscriptions of Chola Kings, beginning with Vikrama Chola, the prakara should have come into existence before Twelfth Century A.D. The Mandapa in front carrying an inscription of Parakrama Pandya should likewise be assigned to a period earlier than Thirteenth Century A.D.

A shrine dedicated to *Panpadaikka Aduvar* (probably Natarajar) was erected by a certain Pirudigangarayar of Purakkudi who gifted lands for offerings, worship etc. The gift was made in the reign of Kulothunga III.

A temple of Kailasamudaiya Mahadeva at Panchavanmadevi (a hamlet of Nallur) and its treasury are also referred to in epigraphs of Kulothunga III.

A Matha called Parasamaya Kolari Matha was in existence in the temple in the reign of Vikrama Chola. A special worship called *Ayirattennurruvan Sandhi* was instituted in the temple of Kailasamudaiyar with provisions

for offerings to Aludaiya Pillaiyar and Sokkiyar of Nallur temple in the reign of Raja Raja III. There are two inscriptions of interest. An inscription of the reign of Rajadhi Raja II records the order of the assembly of Panchavanmadevi reducing the rate of Varam and Kadamai to be paid on lands by the cultivator and fixing the duties and privileges to be enjoyed by certain classes of persons. In the reign of Raja Raja III the Mahajanas exempted the temple lands from the payment of sabhaviniyoga.

THIRUMAYILADI

Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple

Thirumayiladi, a hamlet of Anikaranchatiram village has a railway station next to Coleroon railway station. It has regular bus service also.

Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple which covers an area of about an acre is said to have been built by a Chola King. This temple has a Swayambu Lingam. Recent renovation of the temple by the trustees of the temple was in 1957. It has a single prakaram, two sanctum sanctorum apart from a sixty feet high Rajagopuram. There is an Arthamandapam and a Mahamandapam here. In a separate sanctum stands the divine consort Sri Brahannayagi Amman. There is also a separate shrine for Sri Balasubramaniaswamy, facing north. Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Natarajar, Dakshinamoorthy, Brahma, Lingothbhavar, Durgai, Lakshmi, Saptha-mathar, Mariamman, Ayyanar, Pidari and Drowpathi Amman are the other deities. There are also several Uthsava Vigrahams (bronzes), of which that of Sri Subramania seated on a peacock deserves special mention. The Sthala Puranam of this shrine is narrated in the Skandha Puranam.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin Priests who are paid monthly salary from the temple

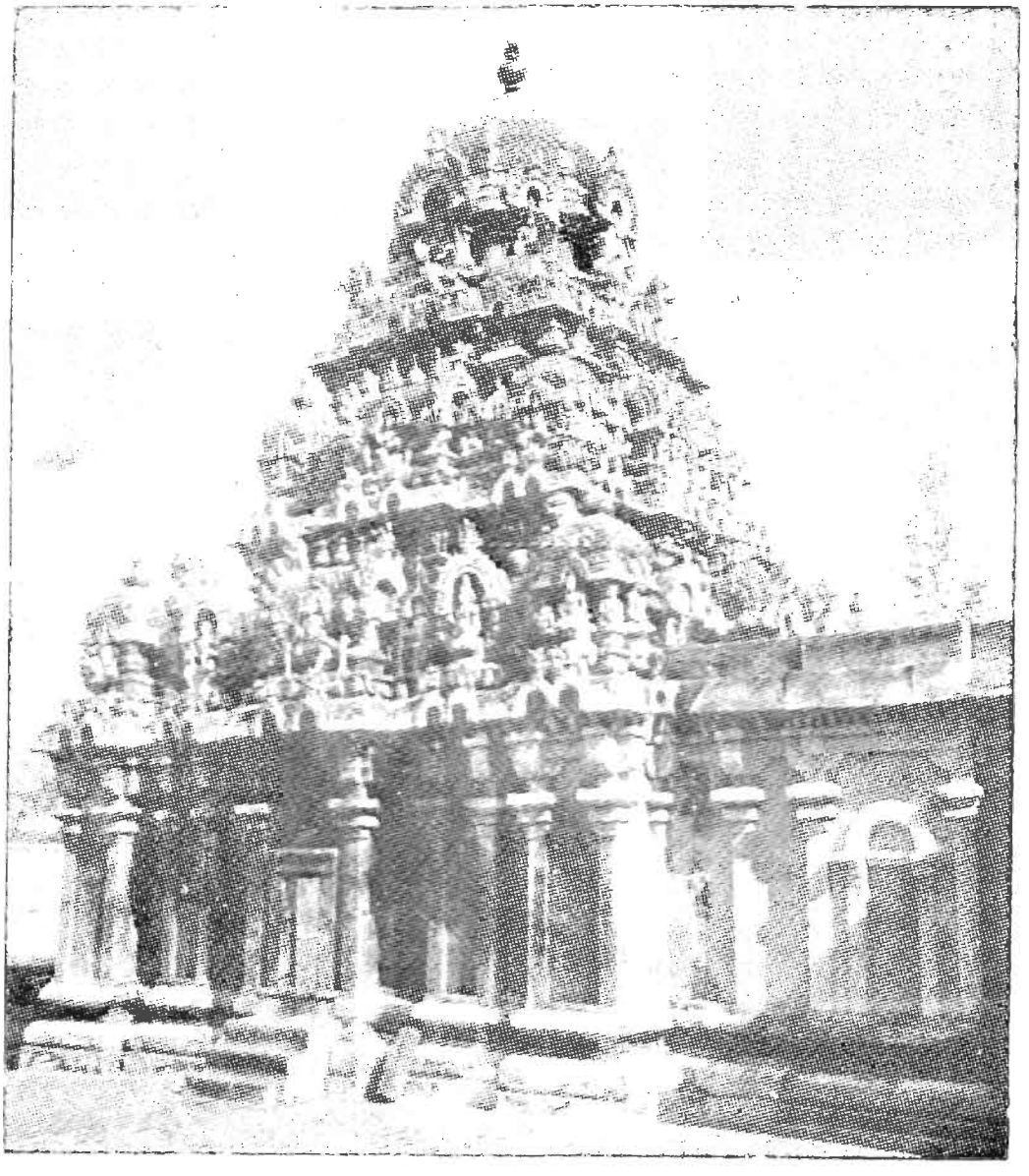
revenues. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 12,500 donated by devotees of which the costly golden spear of Sri Balasubramaniar weighing about ten sovereigns deserves mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 160 acres of wet and 168 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 33,300 by way of rent. This amount is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 50 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 120 per annum. The following are the several vahanas, owned by the temple : peacock, bandicoot, horse, rishabam sooran and swan.

Of the several festivals celebrated, Skandha Sashti in Ayppasi which spreads over a period of ten days is the most important one.

Legend has it that once an argument arose between Lord Siva and Parvathi (*Sakthi*) as to who was the most beautiful among the two with the result that Lord Siva suddenly disappeared from Her in anger. Sri Parvathi who came here in the form of a beautiful peacock, after a protracted search, felt extremely happy when She found Him here as a 'Sundara Lingam' and danced in ecstasy; hence the name Thirumayiladi.

This place is also called Kanvasramam as the reputed sage Kanva performed a severe penance and attained 'Kayasidhi' here and also as Vilvaranyam as Sri Lakshmi who got separated from Vishnu did a severe penance here and attained him through the grace of the Lord. The Holy Sivagangai is the sacred Theertham here and the Vilva tree, the "Sthala Viruksham".

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of two Trustees, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.



Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple Vimanam
Thirumayiladi.

INSCRIPTIONS

Only one fragmentary epigraph has been noticed so far in the temple which refers to the gift of land for conducting the service called Vikrama Chola Sandhi instituted in the temple of Trailokya-mahadevis-varamudaiyar. Evidently there should have been another shrine in the temple named after the above person.

SIRKALI

Sri Sattanathaswamy Temple

Sirkali which is a taluk town has a railway station on the Madras-Mayuram line. Its population according to the 1961 Census is 19,531. The ancient Siva temple in this place is dedicated to Sri Sattanathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam.

The temple with its high walls and four lofty towers on all the four sides is in the heart of the town. Within the enclosure, there are three separate main shrines facing east in the same compound, one for Brahmapureeswarar, one for Tirunilai Nayaki and one for Saint Thirugnanasambandhar who was born in this place. In the front mandapam of the Swamy's shrine is Sri Muthu Sattanathar. There are steps in the northern and western prakara leading up to a terrace where the shrines of Sri Uma Maheswara and Sri Sattanatha Swamy are located. The terrace is referred to as *Tiruthoni Malai* (the hill of the Holy Boat). In the outer prakara, in the north-west, is the shrine of Thirugnanasambandhar and near it, in the north-east is the shrine of the divine Mother.

Lord Siva is worshipped generally in three forms - Guru, Linga and Sangama. A noteworthy feature here is that all the three forms have a place. Sri Uma Maheswarar known also as *Thoni Appar* (Lord of the boat) is the Guru Moortha, Sri Brahma Pureeswarar is the Linga Moortha and Sri Sattanatha Swamy is the Sangama Moortha. This Sangama Moortha is one

of the eight aspects of Bairava. The Goddess here is worshipped as *Sthira Sundari* (Thirunilai Nayaki).

The temple is also of great epigraphical importance. There are forty seven inscriptions in the temple, covering a period of about six centuries from the days of the Chola King, Vira Rajendra (1063-1070 A. D.) to those of Venkatadeva Raya (1598 A. D.) of the Vijayanagar line. Besides revealing the great interest that the Chola and the Vijayanagar kings showed in this temple, the inscriptions contain numerous references to the habits, customs and ways of life of the people.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests according to the Karana Agama. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 2,92,000 of which the golden kavacham of the Ambal, Swamy and Sambandhar, Kasumalai necklace and the precious stones studded Thadangam of the Ambal deserve special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 1,400 acres of wet and 280 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of Rs. 2,26,000 by way of rent. This amount is utilised towards the emoluments of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 600 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 1,000 per annum. There are three big cars, two palanquins, a silver ratham, four silver rishabams and the following vahanas : swan, parrot, elephant, horse, goat, bandicoot, bootham and peacock.

The Brahmothsavam of the temple falls in the month of Chithirai (April-May). On the second day of the festival, the incident of Sri Uma Devi feeding the milk of divine wisdom to Gnanasambandhar is celebrated with great enthusiasm. There are also festivals in the month of Adi (July - August), and also during Navarathri for the Goddess Thirunilai Nayaki. Of those and several others, the Thirumulaippal festival (i.e., second day festival of Brahmothsavam) is the most important one which attracts about 40,000 devotees from far and near. At this festival, pots of milk are offered to the deity and it is believed

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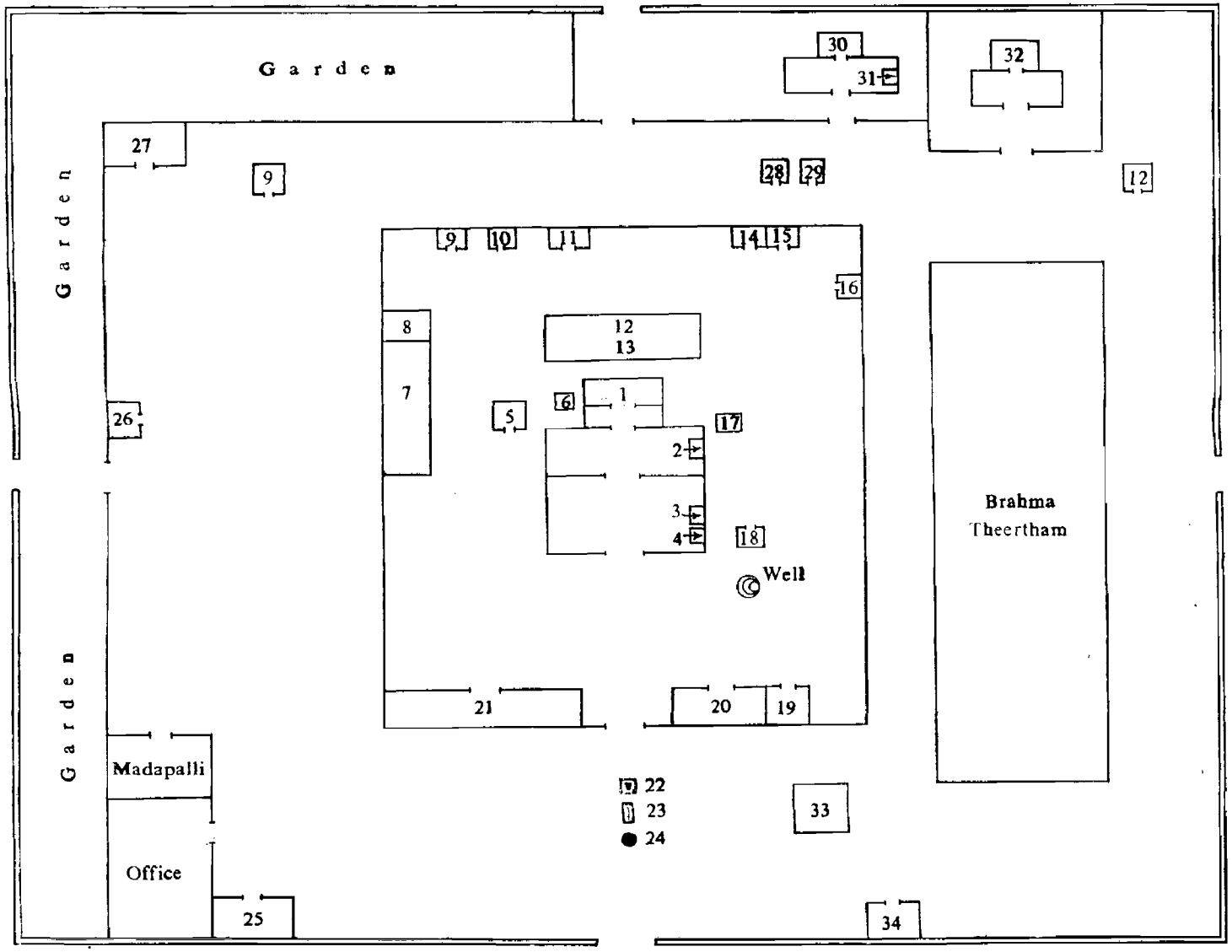
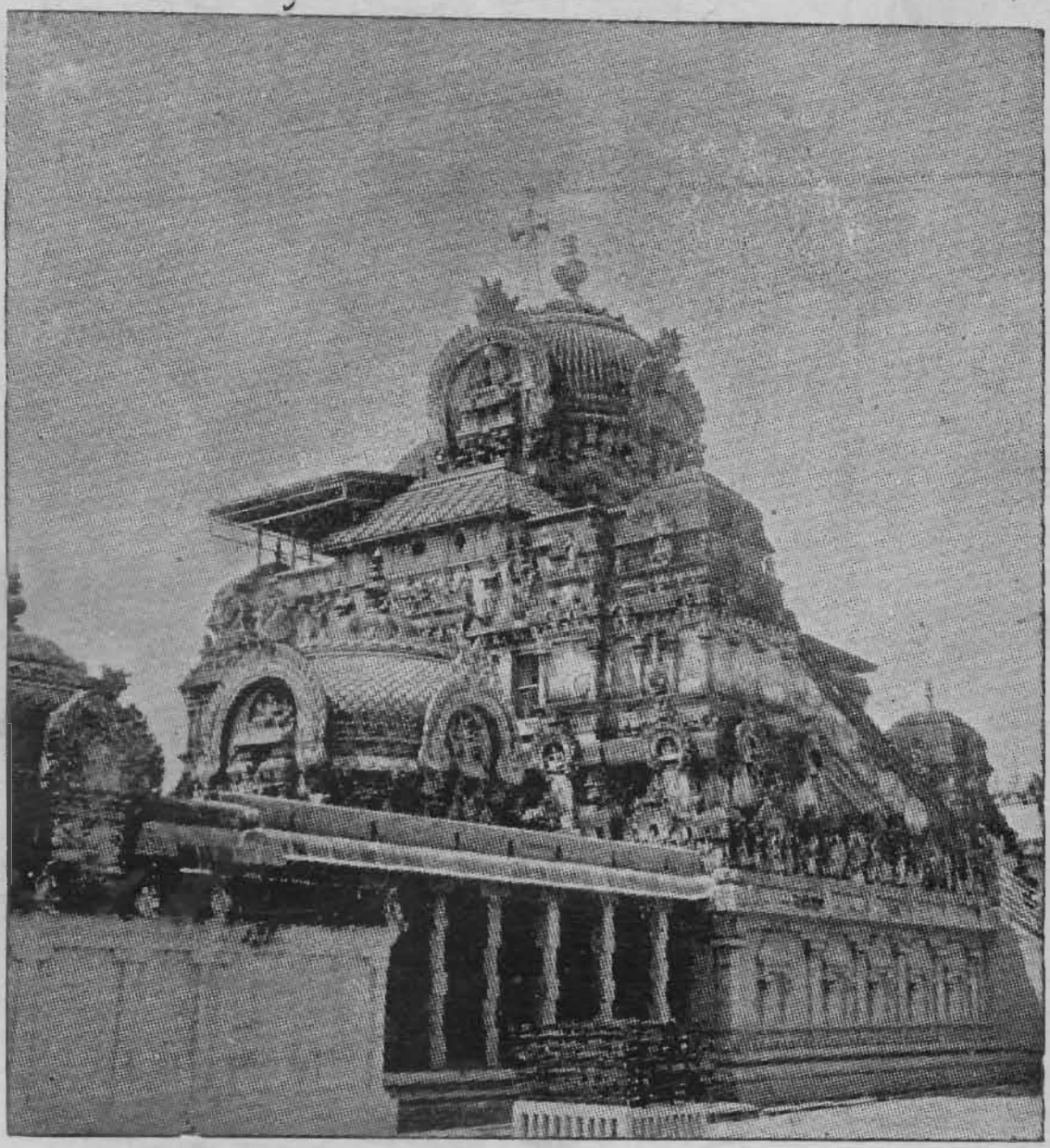
5. Gnanasambandhar
6. Dakshinamurthy
7. Sixty-three Nayanmars
8. Sapthamathars
9. Vinayagar
10. Somaskandhar
11. Sapthapureeswarar & Muthu Sattanathar
12. Sattanathar
13. Thoniappar
14. Malai Kumaran
15. Gajalakshmi
16. Palliarai
17. Chandikeswarar
18. Devendralingam
19. Navagrahas
20. Brahmapureeswarar, Bairavar, Suriyar etc.
21. Vahana Godown
22. Dwajasthambam
23. Nandhi
24. Balipeedam
25. Store Room
26. Bairavar
27. Elephant Stable
28. Kalipureeswarar
29. Gananathanayanar
30. Gnanasambandhar & Gnanapureeswarar
31. Gnanambigai
32. Thirunilainayagi Ambal
33. Alankara Mandapam
34. Yagasalai

SRI SATTANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

SIRKALI

(Not to Scale)





Sri Sattanathaswamy Temple " Thoni " Vimanam
Sirkali.

that those who drink the milk which has been so offered to the Lord become wise.

Besides these, on every Friday at midnight, there is a special pooja for Sri Sattanathar. A coat of civet is laid on the idol during this pooja. Attached to this Devasthanam are a number of small shrines dedicated to various Gods and Goddesses.

As Kali offered expiatory prayers here to the Lord, the place got the name Sri Kalipuram or Sirkali.

The sacred sthalam is also known as Brahmapuram, Puhali, Thonipuram and Kalipuram (or Sirkali). Brahma is said to have worshipped Lord Siva here and so the place is called Brahmapuram. Because it is said to have served as a refuge to the Devas when they were harassed by the Asuras, it is referred to as *Puhali* (i.e., a place of refuge). When the earth was a formidable sheet of water at the time of the deluge, Lord Siva, the Purana says, is said to have come with Uma Devi in a boat to see the place. Hence the place is also referred to as *Thonipuram* (the boat city). In the Puranas, we find a number of other names viz., Venguru, Poontharay, Sivapuram, Puravam, Shanbai, Kochivayam, Kazhumalam, Sivacharya-puram, Giripuram, Mooladhara Kshethram etc.

According to a legend, Lord Siva is said to have appeared as Sattanathar in order to destroy the pride of Vishnu. Lord Vishnu as Trivikrama measured the earth and sky with his two steps and with the third step he sent King Mahabali to the nether world. After this, He is said to have roamed about with pride instilling great fear in the hearts of mortals. Lord Siva brought him down with a blow and gave him life when Lakshmi prayed for it. It is said that Vishnu desired that the Lord should wear his bone and skin (egoism and maya). Thereupon Lord Siva wore the skin as mantle and the bone as a mace and took the name of Sattai Nathar (or Sattanathar), Lord of the Skin coat. There are a number of puranic stories connected with this sacred sthalam from which we learn that Kumara, Kali, Brahma, Vishnu, Guru,

Indra, Surya, Chandra, Agni, Rahu, Kethu, Sesha and Vyasa had worshipped Lord Siva here.

There are twenty-two sacred Theerthams in this town. Of these, two are within the temple. One is the Brahma Theertham a well laid out tank opposite to the shrine of the Goddess. It was here that Uma Devi, the Mother gave to child Thirugnana-sambandhar the milk of Siva Gnana. The other sacred water called Parachara Theertham is in the inner prakara of the Lord's shrine. Outside the temple near the western tower is the Kali Theertham. Three other holy waters are the small rivers, Vinayaga Nadhi to the east of the town, Purava Nadhi said to have been brought from Cauvery by Agni Deva for the sake of emperor Sibi and Kazhumala Nadhi, said to have been brought by Lord Vinayaga from the Kamandal of the Sage Agasthya.

The first notable personality associated with this place is Saint Thirugnansambandhar. The story goes that as a child, he was standing on the bank of Brahma Theertham while his father Sivapada Hirudaya was having his ablutions in it. The child cried out "Mother, Oh, Mother, Father, Oh, Father". Lord Siva in His infinite grace ordered that Uma Devi should feed the child. Uma Devi, the Mother came down and gave the child milk in a golden cup. Thus the child became Gnanasambandhar, one related to *Divine Wisdom*. He saw before him the beautiful vision of Umamaheswara and began to sing his first verse, viz., "*Todudaiya Seviyan*" in Tamil. Saint Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal visited Sirkali and met Gnanasambandhar. Both the Saints as a merger of "*Arulkadal*" and "*Anbukkadal*", joined together and sang in praise of the Lord. Saint Sundaramurthi Nayanar came and traversed down the outskirts of Sirkali but declined to enter the town saying that he would not pollute with his feet the birth place of Thirugnana-sambandhar. He has extolled the Lord of Sirkali in a poem of ten stanzas, commencing "*Sathalum Pirathalum*" (சாதலும் பிறத்தலும்). Saint Manickavasagar too had visited this place on his way to Chidambaram and has recorded it in a poem of ten exquisite stanzas. There are several verses in "*Thiruppugazh*" on Lord Muruga of Sirkali by Saint Aruna-girinathar, Thriugnanasambandhar Pillai Tamil by Masilamani

Desikar, Kazhi Pallu, Kazhi Antathi and Kazhi Puranam by Arunachala Kavirayar contain other verses in praise of this sthalam.

Sirkali is often described as Gnana Bhoomi in as much as it has given to the world a galaxy of Saints Gnanasambandhar, Kazhi Gangai Meikandar, Sirkali Chitrambalanadigal, Shanbai Gnanaprakasar and Sirkali Marai-gnanasambandhar.

The temple is under the management of the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam and is a veritable jewel among the several Saivite shrines of the south.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are referred to in inscriptions.

CHOLAS :

Vira Rajendra (1063-1070 A. D.)

Kulothunga I (1070-1120 A.D.)

Kulothunga II (1136-1150 A. D.)

Raja Raja II (1151-1163 A. D.)

Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1175 A.D.)

Kulothunga III (1179-1216 A.D.)

Raja Raja III (1216-1246 A.D.)

PANDYA :

Sundara Pandya (1251-1270 A.D.)

and Konerinmai Kondan

PALLAVA CHIEFTAIN :

Kopperunchinga (Thirteenth Century A.D.)

VIJAYANAGAR :

Virupanna Udaiyar (1391 A.D.)

Krishna Devarayar (1509-1529 A.D.)

Venkata Deva (1586-A.D). & Vithala Deva.

The earliest King referred to is Vira Rajendra and the latest is Ramappa Nayaka, son of Kodal Vasavana Nayaka.

VILLAGE :

The village is called Thirukkazhumalam, a Brahmadeya in Thirukkazhumalanadu, a sub-division of Rajadhi Raja Valanadu. In the reign of certain Koneri Deva Maharaja (1488 A.D.) the village was called Sigali.

THE SHRINES :

The main deity is mentioned as Thiruthonipuramudaiyar of Thirukkazhumalam and also Thiruthoni Puramudaiya Nayanar. The main shrine should have come into existence before the reign of Vira Rajendra I as his inscriptions are found on the walls. The name of the Goddess is referred to as Periyanachiyar in an inscription of Vira Rajendra. In the reign of the same king, an image of Aludaiya Pillaiyar (Gnanasambandhar) was set up in the temple by Uyyavandan Rajavichadharan, one of the servants of the king. This temple on account of its association with Gnanasambandhar was held in high esteem and a number of epigraphs record gifts of flower gardens, lands, vessels etc., to this temple of Aludaiya Pillaiyar. A shrine of Mangaiyarkkarasi Nachiyar was added to this shrine of Aludaiya Pillaiyar in the reign of Raja Raja III. A native of Gangaikonda Cholapuram repaired the first prakara of the shrine of Aludaiya Pillaiyar in the reign of Raja Raja III. The mandapam in front of the shrine should have come into existence before the reign of Kulothunga III as it bears his inscriptions.

A certain Kalingarayan erected the shrine of Thiruvenkadudaiyar in the reign of Raja Raja III. In the reign of Raja Raja II a shrine of Rajarajesvaramudaiya Nayanar is referred to. This should be a separate shrine erected either by Raja Raja I or Raja Raja II. A chief of Ponparri, in Pandimandalam set up images of Rajakka Nayanar and Maragatha Chokkiyar in the temple in the reign of Pandya (Thirteenth

Century A.D.) and instituted a special worship called Rajakkal Nayanar Sandhi in the main temple, in the name of the king. In the reign of Kulothunga, lands were gifted for setting up images and restoring those that had been already set up and had suffered damage. In the reign of the Vijayanagara ruler, Virupanna Udaiyar, 1391 A.D., a mandapam was added to the temple. During the reign of the same king, a Matha called Thirugnansambandhar Matha was in existence for which lands were gifted.

Golden drinking vessels were gifted to the temple in the reign of Raja Raja III. A number of records refer to gift of lands for flower gardens. In the reign of Kopperunchinga (Thirteenth Century A.D.) lands were gifted for the recitation of Thiruppadigam in the temple. A few inscriptions throw interesting light. One epigraph refers to the revenue survey conducted in the reign of Kulothunga I, who abolished tolls. Another inscription (date not known) registers a gift of land for the teachers who gave instruction in *Thiruvisai* (music). In the eighth regnal year of Raja Raja III, lands belonging to certain persons who proved traitors were sold in public auction to the temple. In the reign of Venkata Devaraya, 1598, an Abishega, called *Apadudharana* is referred to. The great Vijayanagara ruler, Krishna Devaraya, has made sarvamanya grants to the temple.

THIRUKKOLAKKA

H. O. SIRKALI

Sri Thalapureeswarar Temple

Thirukkolakka, a part of Sirkali town is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Thalapureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. He is said to have been worshipped by the reputed Sage Kanwa himself. His divine consort is known as Osai Nayaki. The temple is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Sirkali at a distance of about two kilometres.

The temple facing east covers an area of about 70 cents. It is said that it was built about one thousand years ago during the period of the famous Chola Kings. Renovations were made sixty years back by a Nattukottai Chettiar. There are two enclosures, two sanctum sanctorum here apart from an Artha-mandapam and a Mahamandapam. Sundarar and Sambandhar have visited this shrine, offered worship and composed several sacred "*padhigams*" in praise of the Lord. There is a holy tank in front of the temple.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary priests according to Siva Agama. They are paid a decent monthly salary from the temple revenues. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 1,000 mostly donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 37 acres and 78 cents of both wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of Rs. 8,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The temple owns a peacock, two rishabams, a swan and a bandicoot vahanam, all made of wood.

Of the several festivals celebrated here, the "Thiru-mulaippal Uthsavam"which takes place in the month of Chithirai (April-May) is the most important one. On this day the idol of Sri Sambandhar of Sirkali Sattanathaswamy Temple is brought here to signify the receipt of the divine cymbals from the Lord. This festival attracts thousands of devotees from far and near.

Legend has it that it was here that Lord Siva gave Thirugnanasambandhar the divine cymbals which acquired a special "*Nadham*" or sound through the divine grace of His consort and hence the name of the Lord, Thalapureeswarar and His consort Osai Nayaki.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THIRUMULLAIVASAL

Sri Mullaivananathaswamy Temple

One of the hoary Saivite shrines of this region is located in Thirumullaivasal or *Then Thirumullaivasal*, a coastal village about thirteen kilometres from Sirkali. Thirumullaivasal Panchayat has a population of 7,326.

The place attracts a large number of devotees for sea bath especially on occasions like the New Moon, eclipse etc. The presiding deity of this temple is Sri Mullaivananathar a Swayambu Lingam. The divine consort is known as Sri Kodhai Ambal. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had sung in praise of this deity.

The temple which covers an area of about 60 cents is said to have been built some 800 years ago by the Chola Kings. It has a single prakaram, two sanctum sanctorum and twenty two stone pillars. There are several copper plate inscriptions of Sri Krishna Deva Raya here and they speak of the grants made to the temple by several devotees. The holy Mullai creeper is held sacred here.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary priests according to the Siva Agama. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 200, all donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,600 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are four ancient vahanas in the temple, viz., rishabam, swan, horse and bandicoot, all made of wood.

Legend has it that it was here that Parvathi did a severe penance and learnt the sacred Panchakshara Manthra "*Namasivaya*" from Sri Dakshinamurthi. Besides, it is also believed that Indra had worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss.

The interesting legend concerning the origin of the temple is as follows : Once a Chola King happened to sojourn with

his retinue on the sea-shore here. The king's horse was hamstrung by a Mullai creeper here and it could not move. The king drew his sword and cut the creeper. Immediately, blood gushed forth. The wonder-struck king found out a beautiful Swayambu Lingam with a cut at its top. He repented much for his sinful act and decided to put an end to his life when an "*Asariri*" (the voice of the God) stopped him from doing so and induced him to construct a temple at this place. At once the king erected a beautiful shrine here and installed the Lingam. From that day, the presiding deity came to be known as Sri Mullai Vananathar. Sri Kodhai Ambal, His divine consort is situated in a separate sanctum in a standing posture. There are several bronze idols here for the God, Goddess and others.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

THIRUKARAGAVUR

Sri Velvidainathaswamy Temple

Thirukaragavur, otherwise known as Varisaippatru lies at a distance of about six kilometres south of Sirkali on the way to Then Thirumullaivayil. It is connected with Sirkali and Mayuram by bus.

Spreading over an area of about 1·5 acres, Velvidainathaswamy Temple has a single prakaram, two vimanams and two sanctum sanctorum. It is said that it was built many years ago by Chola Kings who ruled over this region. Several additions and renovations were made about six years back by the villagers. There are several informative stone inscriptions on the outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum. The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Velvidainathar is represented by an installed Lingam of about 1½ feet in height. In a separate sanctum stands His divine consort Sri Kaviyanganni Amman. It is

believed that the water in the nearby sacred well known as "*Paalkinaru*" turns milky white during Thai Amavasai ; hence the name Sri Velladainathar or Velvidainathar for the Lord. Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Kariamanicka Perumal, Sri Devi and Sri Bhu Devi are the other deities here. Images of Saints Sundarar and Sambandhar have also been installed in the temple.

Poojas are performed four times daily by a hereditary Brahmin priest according to the Kamika Agama. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 1,000. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 32·50 acres of wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 7,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its maintenance. There is a peacock and a rishaba vahanam here made of wood.

Legend has it that it was here that the Lord guided and helped Sri Sundarar in the guise of a hunter, constructed a thatched water-shed and offered him food. A festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm during Chithira Pournami every year in commemoration of this incident. This sacred sthalam had also been visited by Thirugnanasambandhar who had composed several sacred verses in praise of the Lord in his famous "*Thevaram*".

Apart from Chithira Pournami, Thai Amavasai and Skandha Sashti are the regular festivals celebrated here every year. The festival during the Thai Amavasai is the most important one when about 3,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are mentioned in inscriptions.

Kulothunga (1179-1216 A. D.)
Vikrama Chola (1120-1135 A. D.)

Rajadhi Raja (1018-1055 A. D.)
Rajendra (1014-1044 A. D.)
Raja Raja (985-1014 A. D.)

There are a few epigraphs belonging to Chola Kings whose names are not mentioned by name, but by their titles as Parakesari and Rajakesari.

The village of Thirukurugavur is said to be in Thiruvalinadu, a sub-division of Rajadhi Raja Valanadu. The deity is called Thirukkurugavur Mahadeva and Thiruvelladai Mahadeva and Thiruvelladai Andar. In the fifteenth regnal year of Kulothunga III (1194 A. D.) certain Sattan Mandai, one of the Pattinavar of Mannaikonda Cholanallur set up an image of Chandrasekharadeva (probably copper image) in the temple. Images of three mudalis are said to have been set up in the prakara of the same temple in the thirteenth year of Kulothunga. The south wall of the mandapam carries a portrait of a saint whose name is inscribed below as Tapasi Venayil Udaiyan Ilattangilai Aruran. Since the mandapam carries inscriptions of Vikrama Chola and others, it must be dated to Twelfth Century A. D.

A Matha called Thiruchitrambalamudaiyan Matha was in existence in the reign of Vikrama Chola. Probably this Matha was established by Thiruchitrambalamudaiyan Viluppadhiraiyan who gifted lands etc., to the Matha in the reign of Vikrama Chola. A hall called Rajendra Cholan Perambalaru was in existence in Mudikonda Chola Chaturvedimangalam.

Nine persons were appointed in the temple for beating drums for which provisions were made by a certain Uthamachola Muvenda Velan, also known as Semban Arulan Uthamanidhi.

THIRUPPUNGUR

Sri Sivaloganathaswamy Temple

Among the renowned temples of Tamil Nadu, the Thiruppungur temple stands out as the place where according to legends the Lord enabled His great devotee Nandanar to have a darshan. This Sivasthalam is situated at about three kilometres to the west of Vaitheeswarankoil station. Buses are also plying frequently from Vaitheeswarankoil to this place.

The temple is said to have been built during the Chola period. Renovations were made and a kumbabishegam performed in 1908 at a cost of five lakhs of rupees by Sri Chidambaram Chettiar of Chettinad. The temple covers an area of about 2.94 acres with a beautiful sixty six feet high, five tiered Rajagopuram.

The name Thiruppungur has been derived from the sacred Punga tree which is the Sthala Viruksham here. The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Sivaloganathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam in the form of an ant-hill-while His divine consort is known as Chokka Nayaki or Soundhara Nayaki.

This shrine is celebrated in the songs of the famous Saints Appar, Sundarar and Sambandhar. This place has all the unique features of a sacred centre, viz., Sthalam, Moorthy and Theertham.

There are two prakarams and two sanctum sanctorum here apart from two beautiful vimanams with stucco figures on them. There are also eighty eight artistically carved stone pillars. On the south-eastern corner of the prakaram, there is an old shrine dedicated to Sri Nandanar.

The entrance hall housing the Nandhi is an imposing one. The peculiarity of this Nandhi is not, however, its size, but its relative position with reference to sanctum sanctorum and richness in style of carving. The courtyard houses the famous Kulam Vettiya Vinayagar (Vinayagar who dug a tank)

and Muruga shrines and the sacred Punga tree. On the western side of the temple is a temple tank which is said to have been excavated by Nandanar.

In the Mahamandapam are found ancient images of Dwara Palakas. The one on the south is having his head slightly tilted as though to listen to the words of the Lord who commanded him to instruct the Nandhi to move a little and allow Sri Nandanar to have darshan. To preserve Swayambu Lingam in the form of an ant-hill civet is applied on every Monday. Sakthi is worshipped here in a separate large shrine on the north. The Somaskandha images are attractive. In front of Sri Nataraja of this temple is found a beautiful image of a Deva beating a five faced drum (*Panchamukha Vadhyam.*)

Poojas are performed five times daily by hereditary priests according to the principles of Siva Agamam. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 12,800. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 186.63 acres of wet and 61.62 acres of dry lands apart from fourteen houses which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 44,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple as well as for its general maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 200 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 125 per annum.

The temple owns a palanquin, two silver rishabams, and other vahanas such as peacock, rishabam, bandicoot, horse and swan, all made of wood. Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi, Skandha Sashti in Ayppasi, Nandanar's Guru-pooja in Purattasi and Navarathri are the regular festivals observed here every year. The fifth and seventh days of the ten-day Vaikasi Brahmothsavam is the most important one when about 3,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

Many monarchs like Kulothunga III (1179-1216 A. D.) and Raja Raja III (1216-1246 A. D.) and devotees like Viranminda Nayanar have worshipped the Lord here and received His blessings. The Peria Puranam narrates the association of the

three Saints viz., Nandanar, Sundaramurthi and Kalikkamar with this temple.

To recount the popular legend, long ago Nandanar was born in a humble Harijan family in Adanur village which is situated about five kilometres to the west of Thiruppungur. From his early childhood, he yearned for a pious life. He was very much devoted to Sri Natarajar of Chidambaram. People scoffed at him and considered his view as revolutionary and sacrilegious.

Nandanar was performing the temple services by supplying the leather strings required for the temple drums. His mind was set upon having a vision of God as enshrined in the famous local temple at Thiruppungur. He used to go there and stand in front of the temple at a distance. The temple Nandhi was lying across as usual obstructing the line of vision. He prayed to the Lord to have Nandhi moved to enable him to have a darshan. The God acceded to his prayer. The stone bull moved a few feet to the right allowing Nandanar a direct vision of the Lord. His joy knew no bounds and he worshipped the Lord here every day.

A large tank to the west of the temple had fallen into decay at about this time. Nandanar felt that it should be renovated and deepened. Regardless of the magnitude of the work, he ventured to do this work. Pleased with this noble act, and realising the strain involved, the Lord directed His son Vinayaga to go to his assistance. Both of them, by the grace of Lord, completed the work in one night. As the legend goes, Nandanar attained everlasting greatness at Chidambaram and was later transported to Heaven by the divine grace of the Lord of Chidambaram.

Saint Kalikkamar was born at Perumangalam at a distance of a kilometre to the north of Thiruppungur. He was deeply religious. When he heard that Sundarar employed the services of Lord Siva of Arur to pacify the anger of his wife Paravai, Kalikkamar was angry with him for having taken the liberty with the Lord. The Lord wished that these two saintly

souls should become friends and to achieve this, He caused a severe colic to affect Kalikkamar and told him in a dream that it was curable only by Sundarar. Kalikkamar did not like it. Sundarar was on his way to Perumangalam to cure him. Kalikkamar stabbed himself lest he should be cured by the unworthy Sundarar. Seeing this, Sundarar was about to put an end to his own life, when by the grace of the Lord, Kalikkamar was restored to life. The two became very good friends again and worshipped Lord Sivaloganatha at Thiruppungur.

Sundarar made the then Chola King endow twenty four velis of land to the temple of Lord Sivaloganatha as a humble token of gratitude to the Lord who averted a flood at one time and showered rains when there was drought. Songs of Sundarar seem to refer to this episode.

A Board of three Trustees and an Executive Officer, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are in charge of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are represented in the inscriptions: Kulothunga III (1179-1216 A.D.), Raja Raja III (1216-1246 A.D.) and the Pallava Chieftain Kopperunchinga. According to the inscription, Tiruppungur is said to be situated in Tiruvali Nadu, a sub-division of Rajadhiraja Valanadu. The name of the deity is mentioned as Sivalogamudaiya Nayanar. An inscription dated in the eleventh regnal year of Raja Raja mentions a shrine called Vikrama Choliswaramudaiya Nayanar built on the northern side of the second prakara of the same temple by a certain Vikrama Cholan alias Vayanatharaiyan of Marudur.

VAITHEESWARANKOIL

Sri Vaidyanadhaswamy Temple

Vaitheeswarankoil, a village six kilometres south of Sirkali ls a place of pilgrimage in South India. Situated on the Madras-Tiruchi main railway line between Chidambaram and Mayuram, it is nearly 264 kilometres from Madras. It is linked with important centres by both bus and train. The population of the town is 5,045.

Situated in the midst of the small town of Vaitheeswarankoil, the temple with its huge flag mast, massive walls and lofty gopurams covers an area of about 10.70 acres.

The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Vaidhyanadhaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam, facing west. In a separate sanctum stands His divine consort Sri Thayyalnayaki alias Balambal, facing south. There is a separate sannadhi here dedicated to Sri Arumuga Kumarar. The *Vembu* (Margosa) tree is the Sthala Viruksham here. The beautiful tank goes by the name of Siddhamirtha Theertham and is directly in front of the Amman Sannadhi.

The Jatayu Kuntam is in the southern inner prakaram. It is said that Sri Rama performed here the last rites of Jatayu, the legendary Vulture King.

A bath in the temple tank is considered efficacious. The planet Angaraka or Mars is held sacred here. There is a fine bronze image of Angaraka to which pooja is done daily. It is said that Lord Muruga got His divine spear (Vel) here. Men and women believed to be possessed by evil spirits come here to be rid of the spirits by taking bath in the tank. Sri Vaidhyanadhaswamy is hailed as the healer of all ills and He is said to cure 4,480 diseases with Amirthasanjeevi and "*Vilvathadi Mann*" (earth under the sacred Vilva Tree.)

The Goddess Thayyalnayaki is said to accompany Him with the holy oil vessel. "*Nettirapidi Sandhanam*" and "*Thiruchandu Urundai*" are two of the prasadams which are believed to cure all ailments. Thiruchandu Urundai is made by mixing the mud from Angasanthana Theertham and the

ashes from the Kuntam in front of Sri Selvamuthu Kumaraswamy Sannadhi to chanting of the Panchakshara Manthra. The mixture is made into pills, placed at the feet of Thayyalnayaki and then distributed. Nettirapidi Sandhanam is the sandal paste mixed with saffron of equal weight and placed at the feet of Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy, chanting manthras. It is believed that this sandal when applied on the forehead will give the devotees easy success in all their attempts. To get rid of diseases, one is advised to swallow it.

The beautiful image of Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy is attractive. Every month during the Karthigai day, a grand Abishega is performed to Him. Mandalabishega Kirthigai coming once a year attracts a large crowd. Devotees will pour forth the Abishega ingredients in plenty and in particular rose water and milk. After the Abishegam, the collected Theertham will be distributed to the public through a metal channel fitted with nozzles which have been installed in the big mandapam in front of the Abishega Mandapam. Every Tuesday, Angaraka is taken in a procession on his Goat mount.

Some of the attractive sculptures in the temple, according to the Sthala Puranam published by the Dharmapura Adheenam, are considered to be the work of the early Pallavas. This ancient temple has only limited epigraphical information. A number of stones containing valuable inscriptions are said to have been displaced during renovations from time to time. Yet one could see a few ancient inscriptions on the walls of the temple.

Eight inscriptions which have been properly deciphered include those of the following kings: Achuthpapa Nayak (1560-1600 A.D.), Tuljaji Madaraja (1763-1767 A.D.), and Vikrama Chola (1126-1136 A.D.) and Veera Pandyan.

There are excellent bronze images in this temple for Natarajar, Angaraka, Jatayu, Somaskandhar, Singara Velar and Bikshadanar in addition to the usual ones found in all other temples.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests according to the principles of Kamika Agama. The temple owns both antique and modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 10,56,000. In recent

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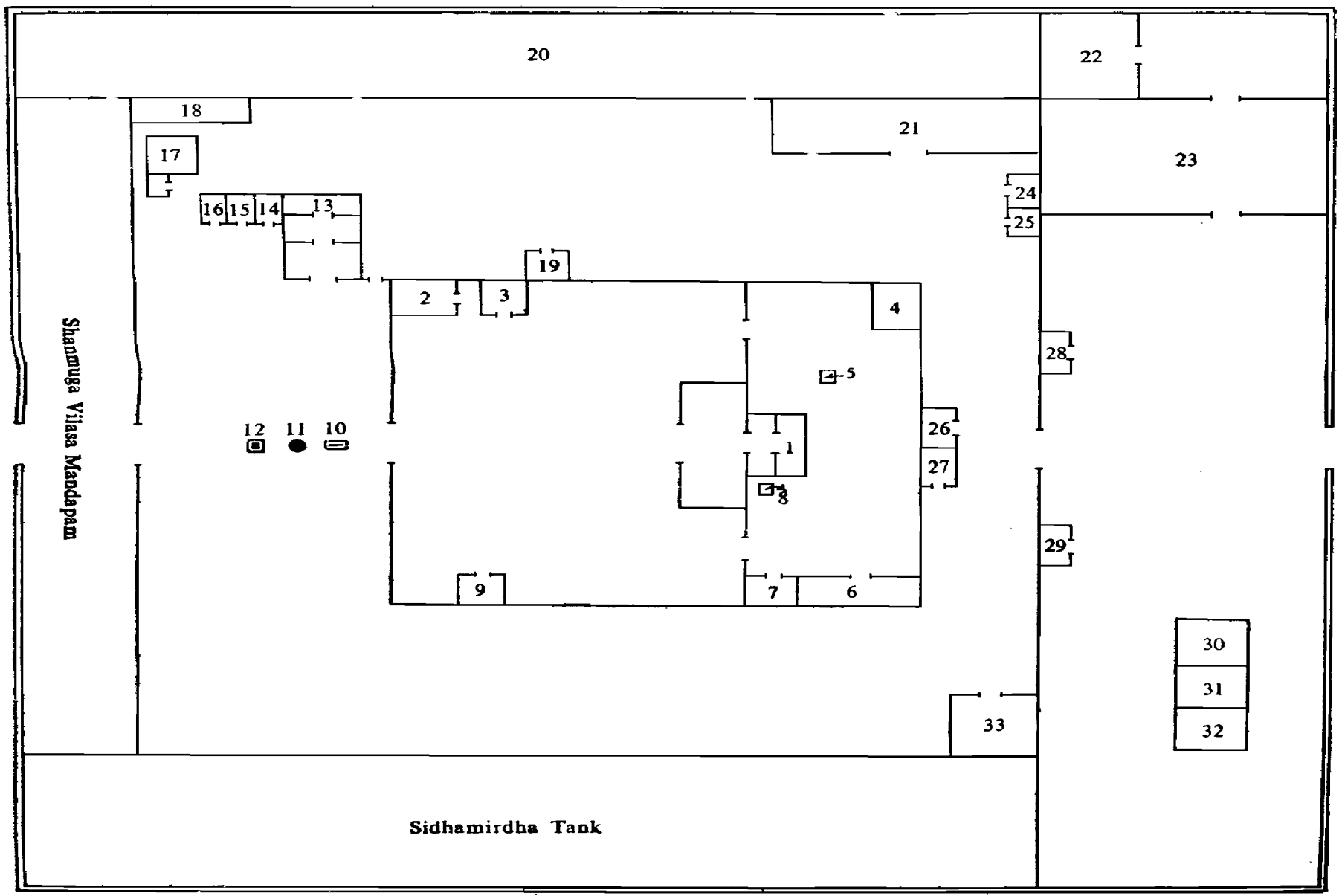
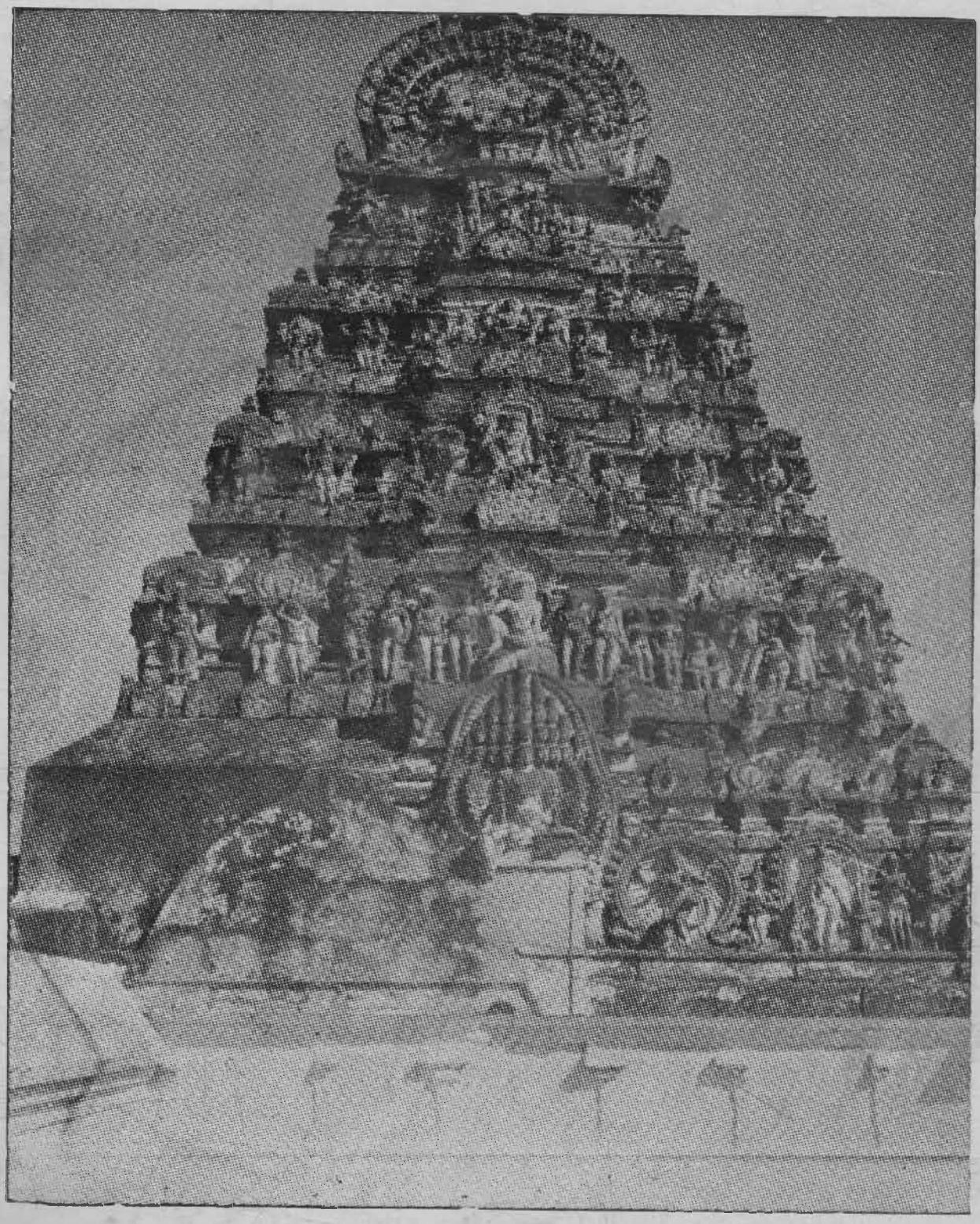
SRI VAIDYANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

VAITHEESWARAN KOVIL

(Not to Scale)





Sri Vaidhyanathaswamy Temple Rajagopuram
Vaitheeswarankoil.

years, the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam has donated golden kavachas to the chief presiding deities, viz., Thayyalnayaki, Vaidhyanadhaswamy, Vinayaga, Angaraka and also to Sri Shanmuga, Valli and Deivayanai. Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy is also now adorned with a Navarathna Kavacham (Coat of nine precious stones) at a cost of Rs. 1,60,000.

Now there is also a proposal to make gem-set kavachams for both Sri Valli and Deivayanai, consorts of Sri Selva Muthukumaraswamy. The immovable properties of the temple comprise 6105.28 acres of wet and 1176.12 acres of dry lands apart from twenty houses and shops which fetch an annual income of Rs. 5,20,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. The temple is running an Elementary School for the benefit of poor children, a Siddha Vaidyasala and a choultry for the convenience and stay of the pilgrims. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 50,000 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 10,000 per annum. The temple owns three cars, a silver ratham, a silver palanquin, three silver rishabams, a silver peacock and several other wooden vahanas. Of the several festivals celebrated here, Brahmothsavams in Panguni and Thai, Adi Pooram, Navarathri and Skandha Sashti are the major ones. The Brahmothsavams in Panguni and Thai attract about 40,000 devotees from far and near.

It is said that Saints Thirugnanasambandhar, Thirunavukkarasar and Arunagirinathar visited this sthalam, worshipped the Lord here and sung several devotional songs in His praise. In addition, Sri Vaduganatha Desika, Sivagnana Desika, Kumara Gurupara Swamigal, Padikasu Thambiran, Chidambara Muni, Kalamega Pulavar, Ramalinga Swamigal and others have also composed many verses and hymns.

Another noteworthy feature of this place is that large number of children are brought to this temple for tonsuring. There is a separate place for this purpose on the outskirts of the town. After tonsuring, children are bathed in the nearby tank first and then in the Siddhamirtha Theertham. A number of devotees deposit salt, pepper and cardamom and throw jaggery in the Siddhamirtha Theertham.

According to the hymns of the saints, this place was originally known as "*Pullirukkuvelur*" (Pul-Jatayu, Irukku-Rig Veda, Vel-Murugan, Oor - Suryan), as all these four offered their worship here. Besides these, Lord Brahma, Angarakan, Sadanandha, Rama, Durvasa, Parasara, Kalaimagal, Bhoomagal and Durga have also visited this sthalam and offered worship. The place also goes by several other names such as Jatayupuri, Vedapuri, Kandhapuri, Angarakapuram, Paridhipuri and Ambikapuram. The shrine is popularly known as Vinaitheerthan Koil and Thayyalnayaki Koil. This temple promising miraculous cure for all the ills of the body, mind and spirit attracts a large number of devotees from far and near on the occasion of the Brahmothsavam in Panguni and during the Muthukumaraswami car festival in Thai. The shrine of Sri Muthukumaraswami in this temple is held very sacred as He is said to have been worshipped by Lord Siva Himself.

This famous temple at Vaitheeswarankoil is under the management of the Dharmapura Adheenam. The chief executive of the temple is a single Trustee appointed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam. A Kumbabishegam was performed in the temple in July 2,1969 after renovation.

The sacred Margosa tree with its thick foliage standing near the eastern gopuram seems to convey the message that faith in Lord Vaidyanatha would act as the panacea for all diseases. It is said that by inhaling the breeze wafted by the Margosa leaves, one feels relieved of one's ailments.

THIRUNAGARI

Sri Kalyana Ranganathaswamy Temple

Thirunagari, situated at a distance of about seven kilometres south-east of Sirkali is noted for its famous Vaishnavite shrine dedicated to Sri Kalyana Ranganatha Swamy. The place is served by regular bus service. The population of Thirunagari Panchayat is 3,346.

Sri Thirumangai Alwar
Sri Kalyana Ranganathaswamy Temple
Thirunagari.

The temple occupies an area of 3.4 acres, and has four prakarams and four sancta. It has two big Rajagopurams with seven tiers and five tiers respectively apart from a three-tiered inner gopuram. The presiding deity, Sri Kalyana Ranganatha, flanked by Sri Devi and Bhu Devi on either side is in a standing posture facing west. There is also a separate shrine here for Sri Thirumangai Alwar. Amirdhavalli Thayar, Kumudhavalli Thayar and Anjaneyar are the other deities here. There are also several bronze idols, all made of panchalogam.

Though the origin of the temple cannot be established precisely, several inscriptions in the temple speak of its ancient glory. This sthalam is said to be described in the Garuda Puranam as narrated by Sri Rudhra Bhagavan to Naradha Munivar. It is also said that the great Vaishnavite Saint, Sri Ramanujar visited this shrine and offered worship to the Lord and Thirumangai Alwar. It is believed that the Lord who was originally facing east turned towards west at the request of Thirumangai Alwar.

Poojas are performed thrice daily by non-hereditary priests of the Vaishnavite sect according to the Vaikanasa Agama. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold, silver and diamond worth about Rs. 97,000, mostly donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 95.90 acres of wet lands and 46.64 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of Rs. 25,000 by way of rent. This amount is utilised for its maintenance.

Of the several festivals celebrated here, the ten-day Brahmothsavam in Panguni (March-April) for Perumal and the Thiru Karthigai Uthsavam in Thai (January-February) for Sri Thirumangai Alwar are the most important when about 20,000 persons congregate here.

The temple which is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members.

INSCRIPTIONS

Four inscriptions are found on the walls of this temple. The earliest king referred to in the inscription is the Vijayanagar Ruler, Viruppanna Udaiyar. His inscription is dated in Saka 1308 (1386 A.D.). It registers a list of sarvamanya grants made to the temple. Krishna Devaraya of the Vijayanagar dynasty is also represented in an inscription of the temple. His record dated Saka 1439 (1517 A.D.) refers to the king's conquest and the remission of taxes made by him in favour of a number of Vishnu and Siva temples in the Chola country. Obviously, the temple of Thirunagari also received his benefactions. The other inscriptions refer to the provision for recitation of Veda and gifts of lands, cows and vessels for offerings etc. Thirunagari was also called Vigneswaranallur and is said to have been situated in Rajadhi Raja Valanadu which comprised the tract of land between Cauvery and Kollidam (Coleroon). The deity is called in inscriptions as Ulaguyya Veetriruntharuliya Nayanar Vailali Manavala.

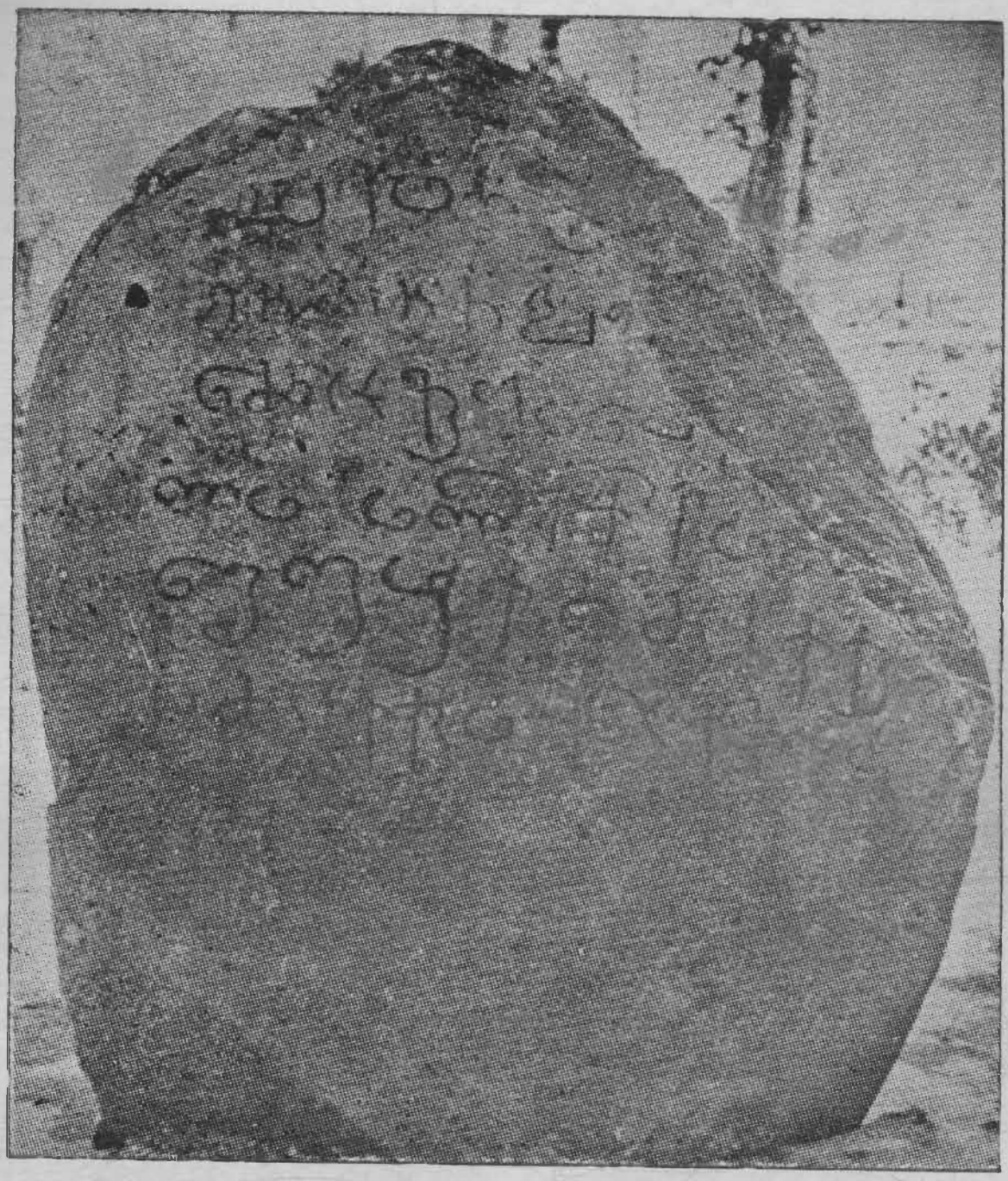
NANGOOR

Sri Narayana Perumal Temple

Nangoor with a population of 3,153 is situated at a distance of about eight kilometres south-east of Sirkali and is connected by bus.

The temple which covers an area of about sixty five cents presents an inspiring view. It has two prakarams and three sanctum sanctorum apart from three vimanams with stucco figures on them. The presiding deity of the temple Sri Narayana Perumal who is popularly known as Nara Narayanar is in a sitting posture. His divine consort is known as Sri Pundarigavalli Thayar.

Poojas are performed five times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests of the Vaishnavite sect according to the Pancharatra Agama. The jewels in the temple are worth over Rs. 2,000. The landed properties of the temple



An inscription in Tamil now in Takupa Siam, recording a mercantile community and warriors from Nangoor
Sri Narayana Perumal Temple
Nangoor.

comprise about 25.38 acres of wet and 17.89 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 6,500 by way of rent. This amount is spent for its upkeep and general maintenance. The temple owns a ratham, a palanquin and as many as six vahanas, viz., garuda, elephant, Hanumar, yali, Adisesha and horse, all made of wood.

Brahmothsavam in Chithirai (April-May) which spreads over a period of ten days, Pavithrothsavam in Avani (August September) for five days and the Mangala Sasana Uthsavam which takes place in the month of Thai (January-February) in honour of Sri Thirumangai Alwar are the regular festivals celebrated here every year. Of these, the Mangala Sasana Uthsavam is the most important one when deities from the Vishnu temples in twelve adjacent villages are brought here. The festival is witnessed by more than 10,000 devotees from far and near. It is said that Sri Thirumangai Alwar had visited all these twelve shrines and sung in praise of the Lord. Inside the temple, there is a small beautiful shrine for Thirumangai Alwar.

There is a legend to the effect that Lord Vishnu came here from Badrikashramam to enable Lord Siva and Sage Mathanga to have His darshan.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

There are three epigraphs found in the temple of which two are dated in the reign of Chola King Parakesari Varman, probably identical with Parantaka I (907-955 A.D.). The other inscription is a later one in Telugu characters. It refers to Kaduvetti Yarappa. According to the Chola inscriptions, the temple is called Thirumani Madakkoil and the deity Thirumani Madakkoil Perumal. One Chola epigraph refers to gift of land for burning a perpetual lamp while the other for offerings and worship during the Arthajamam service.

THIRUVENGADU

Sri Swetharanyeswaraswamy Temple

Thiruvengadu is a village in Sirkali taluk at about ten kilometres south-east of Sirkali. The population of the village is 4,396. From Sirkali there is regular bus service to Thiruvengadu.

The temple facing east covers an area of 792 feet by 310 feet with entrances on the east and west. The ancient gopurams are of exquisite workmanship. There is a temple dedicated to Sri Indra Vinayagar at the eastern entrance.

On entering the temple, one notices the Unjal Mandapam, Thiru Kalyana Mandapam, Agneeswarar Koil, the Agni Theertham and the newly constructed Meykandar Koil. On the outer prakarams are the Surya Theertham and the Suryesar Temple and the Hundred Pillared Mandapam. On the north-western corner is the temple dedicated to the Amman. There is a temple for Sri Bhuda (Mercury). Chandra Theertham is just opposite to these temples. Thiruvengadu also goes by the name of Swetharanya.

In this temple the image of Bhadrakali is at once awe inspiring and captivating. The workmanship in stone is superb. The idol of Goddess Durga is yet another fine piece of workmanship in this temple.

A noteworthy feature here is that the stone image as well as the festival image of Sri Aghoramurthy are in separate sancta, one adjoining the other. This deity is quite different from Sri Aghora Veerabhadrar who according to the legend, was sent by Lord Siva specially to obstruct Daksha Yagam. The Lord took the form of Sri Aghoramurthy to kill the demon Maruthuva Suran. Facing south, the figure of Aghoramurthy is gigantic and awe inspiring. He has fourteen cobras over his body. He stands on His right toe. He has eight shoulders and three eyes with a trident in one of His arms.

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1. Swetharanyar (Moolavar)
2. Somaskandhar
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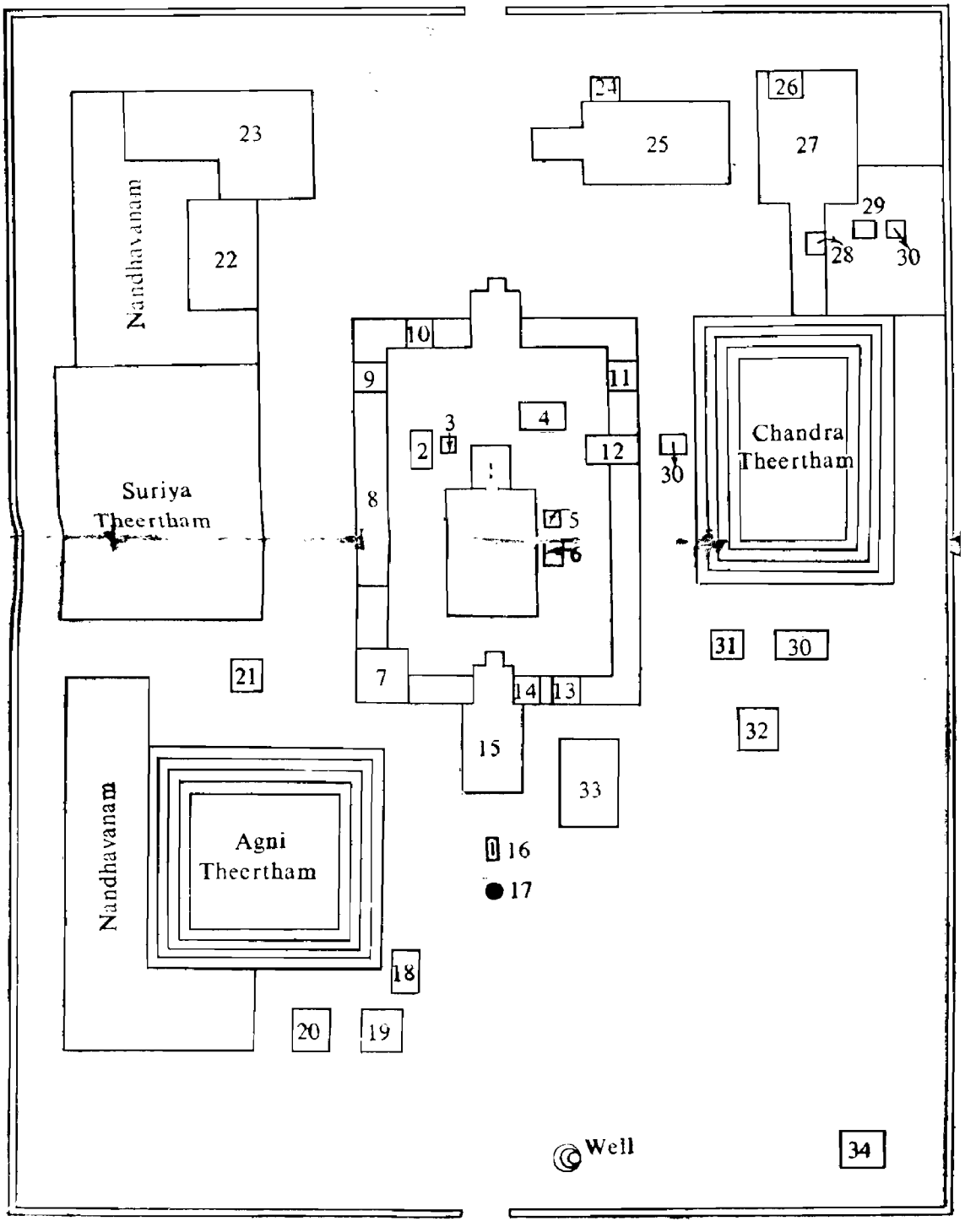
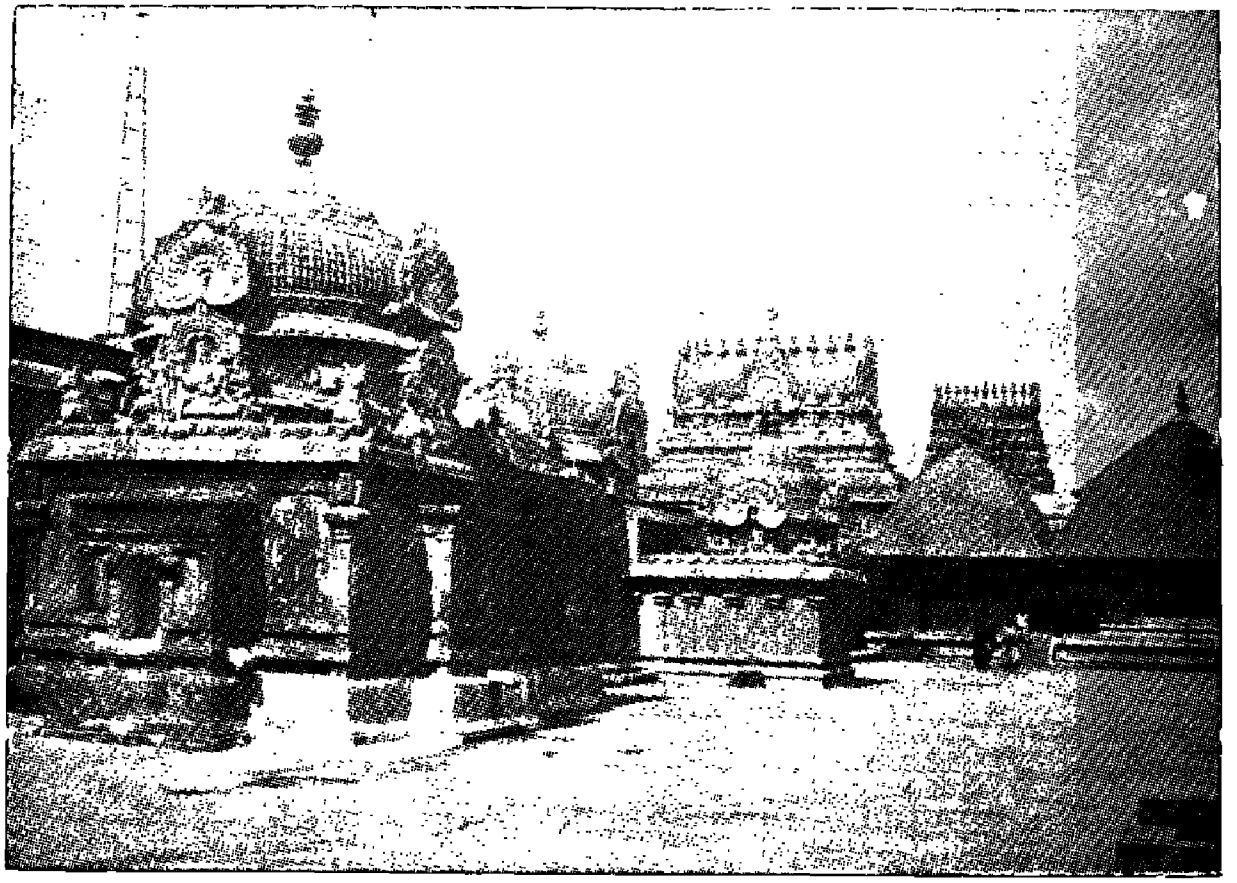
4. Nataraja Sabhai
5. Chandeswarar
6. Swethalingam
7. Madapalli
8. Sixty-three Nayanmars
9. Badhra Kali
10. Thirumal
11. Agorar (Moolavar)
12. Agorar (Uthsavar)
13. Durgai
14. Navagrahas
15. Thirukkalyana Mandapam
16. Nandhi
17. Balipeedam
18. Meikandar Sannadhi
19. Oonjal Mandapam
20. Agneesar
21. Suryesar
22. Office Room
23. Granary
24. Arumuga Peruman
25. Hundred Pillared Mandapam
26. Pillaiyidukki Amman
27. Perianayagi Amman
28. Bhudhan
29. Brahmasannadhi
30. Sthalaviruksham
31. Somesar
32. M.E.S. Room
33. Uthsava Mandapam
34. Yagasalai

SRI SWETHARANYAR TEMPLE

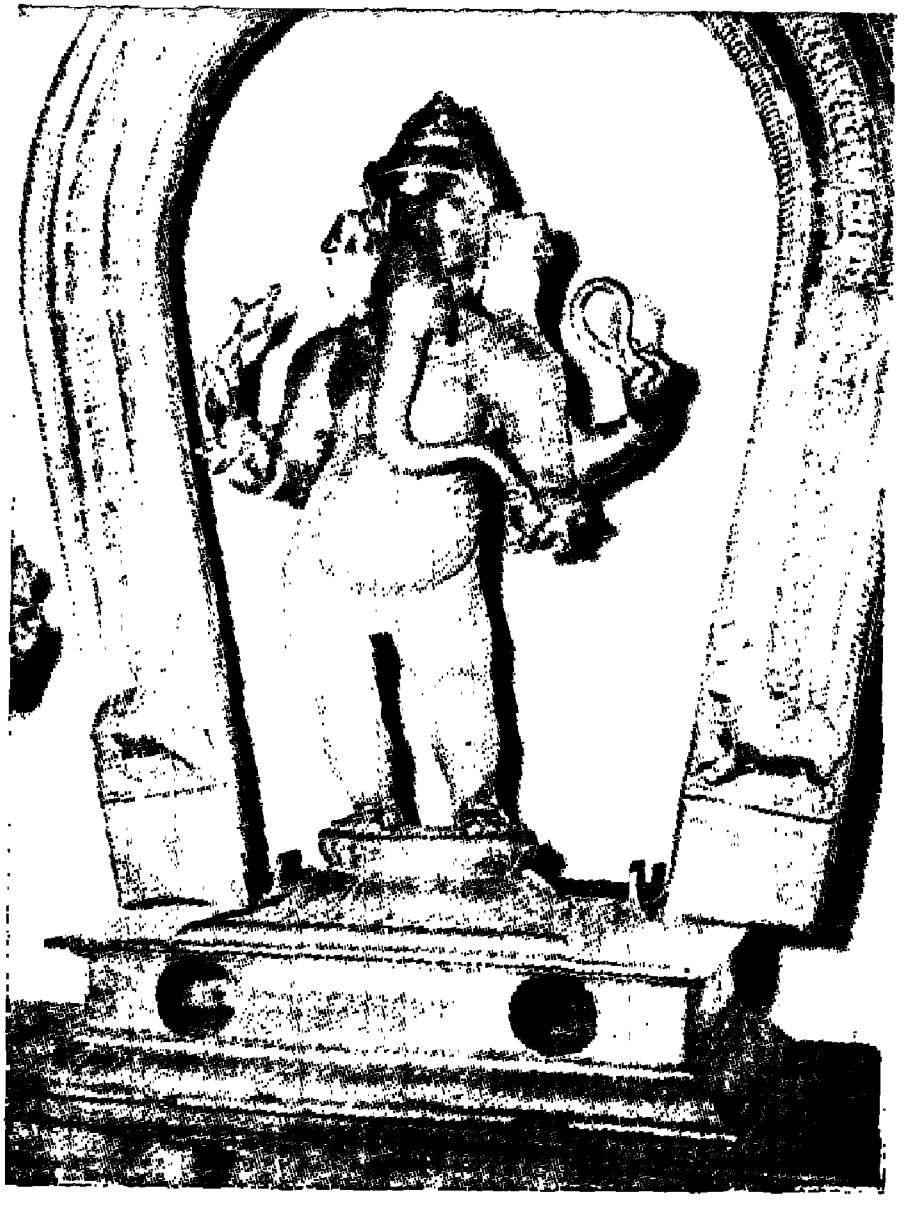
THIRUVENGADU

(Not to Scale)





Sri Swetharanyeswaraswamy Temple Gopuram and Vimanam
Thiruvengadu.



Sri Ganapathi
Sri Swetharanyeswaraswamy Temple
Thiruvengadu.

The figure of the demon lies flat at His feet. The whole image is said to have been made of a single block of stone. The deity is also known as Aghora Sivan. Aghoramurthy is said to have come into existence during midnight on a particular day in the month of Masi. So all the poojas offered to Him at midnight on that day are considered auspicious and sacred. The sannadhi of Bhadrakali is situated directly opposite to this sannadhi.

The most important deities that arrest the attention are those of Sri Swetharanyeswarar, the presiding deity, Sri Natarajar and Aghoramurthy. The divine consort here is known as Sri Brahmavidhyambal alias Periyanayaki. There is a separate shrine and sannadhi for Her. The mural paintings reveal the skill of the artists who painted them and the figures of the two Dwara Palakas are life-like. The hall where Lord Natarajar is seen in a dancing posture is bound to arrest the attention of even a casual visitor. The figure of Natarajar has a ringlet with fourteen "*Chathangais*" (small bells). Around the waist is a girdle with eighty-one rings. He wears a chain with twenty-eight bone-bits, the horn of a pig and the shell of a tortoise. Ganga is indicated on His head by a fish. One is reminded about *Kanaka Sabai* of Chidambaram. The Sabai is said to have been built by one Sri Velliambalavana Thambiran of the Dharmapura Adheenam.

The Navagrahas are in a row here. According to the Sthala Puranam, in the recent past, at the time of renovation, excellent bronze images of Natarajar, Sivakami, Somaskandhar, Buddha and Arthanareeswarar were excavated. The beautiful image of Sri Medha Dakshinamurthy in this temple is unique. He is represented as imparting knowledge to Brahma instead of to Janakathi Munivars as is usually depicted in other temples.

Meykandar who wrote the famous "*Sivagnana Bodham*", an authoritative treatise on Saiva Siddhantha, was born here. The four reputed Saivite Saints, viz., Thirugnanasambandhar, Thirunavukkarasar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have

visited this shrine, worshipped the Lord here and sung His praise. It is also said that Sri Pattinathar was given a Lingam here by Lord Siva who came in the form of an old man. One Sri Achutha Kalappalar, a staunch Saivite devotee who had no children for long is said to have been blessed with a child when he came here and worshipped the Lord.

The Brahmothsavam also known as *Indra Peruvizha* in Masi, Adi Pooram, Karthigai Deepam, Avani Moolam, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Parivettai in Margazhi, Thiruvadhirai and Navarathri are the regular annual festivals celebrated here, of which the Indra Peruvizha which takes place in the month of Masi for a period of thirteen days is the most important one which attracts thousands of devotees from far and near. Even in the famous Tamil Epic Silappadhikaram, there is a reference to this Indra Vizha celebrated at Kaviripoompattinam and the other surrounding places. The Navarathri celebrations here are said to be a speciality.

Poojas are performed six times daily by hereditary priests according to the Karana, Kamika and Maguda Agamas. The ancient and modern ornaments in the temple in gold, silver and diamonds are worth about Rs. 1,14,000. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 761·07 acres of wet and 871·12 acres of dry lands apart from four houses which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,73,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals, for the payment of land tax, electricity charges, annual repairs etc., and for the maintenance of the temple. The temple is maintaining a Girl's High school, an Elementary School, a library and a Thevara Padasala for educating poor children on religious lines, apart from a big rest house constructed recently at a cost of Rs. 40,000 for the stay of the pilgrims. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 300, while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 1,000 per annum. There are two big cars, eight palanquins and several wooden mounts (vahanas) apart from four silver rishabams.

INSCRIPTIONS

There are hundreds of inscriptions in the temple and they show that a queen of Raja Raja presented a golden bowl and another queen a crown of rubies and yet another, some lands to the temple. They also show that the temple was repaired by Sembiyan Madeviar in 991 A.D. As the earliest of the inscriptions relate to the reign of Raja Raja Chola (985-1014 A.D.), the temple must have been built at least 1,000 years ago. From then onwards, many kings have carried out renovations and repairs. There are tanks within the temple premises known as Agni Theertham, Surya Theertham and Chandra Theertham considered holy by the devotees. This ancient temple was renovated a few years ago and the Mahakumbabishegam was performed in 1961.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members who are appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KINGS REPRESENTED :

The following kings are represented in inscriptions.

CHOLAS :

Raja Raja I	(985-1014 A.D.)
Rajendra I	(1014-1044 A.D.)
Vira Rajendra	(1063-1070 A.D.)
Kulothunga I	(1070-1120 A.D.)
Vikrama Chola	(1120-1135 A.D.)
Kulothunga III	(1178-1218 A.D.)

PANDYAS :

Jatavarman Sri Vallabha Deva	(1092-1115 A.D.)
Jatavarman Kulasekhara	(1190-1217 A.D.)
Jatavarman Sundara Pandya	(1251-1270 A.D.)

VIJAYANAGARA KINGS :

Virupanna Udaiyar	(1393 A.D.)
Krishna Devaraya	(1509-1529 A.D.)
Mahratta King-Tukkoji Maharaja	(1728-1736 A.D.)

The earliest king to be represented in inscriptions is Raja Raja I. His inscriptions range from the second regnal year to twenty-eighth regnal year (986-1013 A.D.),. The latest king to be represented is Tukkoji Maharaja, Saka 1652 (1730 A.D.).

VILLAGE :

From the inscriptions of Raja Raja, it is seen that Thiruvengadu is referred to as Nangoor in Nangoor Nadu, a sub-division of Rajendra Singa Vala Nadu. Evidently, Nangoor has been a great city which included the present village of Thiruvengadu. The name of Rajendra Singa Vala Nadu is evidently after one of the titles of Raja Raja I. Subsequently in the reign of Rajadhi Raja I, the son and successor of Rajendra, the-sub-division was re-named as Rajadhiraja Vala Nadu.

THE SHRINES :

The main deity is referred to as Sri Thiruvengadu Deva at Nangoor in Vadakarai Nangoor Nadu. Thiruvengadu Udaiyar, Thiruvengadu Peruman, Thiruvengadu Udaiya Nayanar and Swetharanyeswarar are the other names by which the deity was known in the Chola period.

The central shrine, an earlier foundation, seems to have been renovated in the reign of Raja Raja I. The mandapam in front of the shrine is called Vikrama Cholan Thirumandapam. The Chola King Vikrama Chola was seated on the steps of this mandapam, when he made a gift of land for a Mutt. In all probability the mandapam was erected by him. The Chandrasekhara shrine should have come into existence before 1393 A. D. The Ganesa shrine called the shrine of Periya Pillaiyar bearing an inscription of

Raja Raja II (1151-1163 A. D.) had been constructed in the middle of Twelfth Century A.D. The inner gopuram dates from the reign of Raja Raja I. The outer east gopuram was constructed by Vikrama Pandya in Thirteenth Century A.D. and is called Vikrama Pandyan Thiruvadal. The west inner gopuram should be assigned to a period later than Thirteenth Century and likewise the west outer gopuram. The first prakaram bears inscriptions of Chola Emperors beginning with Vikrama Chola. It must have come into existence before that period. In the fifth regnal year of Vira Pandya, a certain Vaidyachakravarthi constructed the shrine of Virapadisvaramudaiya Nayanar in the name of the king and the shrine of Goddess Veyanatholi Nachiyar. This must have been another shrine within the prakaram.

IMAGES:

A number of metal images were gifted to the temple during the Chola period which are referred to in inscriptions. A gift of gold was made by Kuttan Viraniyar, the queen of Raja Raja during his twenty-eighth regnal year for offerings to an image of *Adavallar* (Natarajar). In the reign of Rajadhi Raja I, an image of *Picha Devar* (Bikshadanar) was set up by Ambalan Seyyavayar who gave lands, gold and silver ornaments for its maintenance and opened a charity house. The same person obtained for the temple some lands from King Rajendra I. In the twenty-sixth regnal year of Raja Raja, an image of Vrishabhavahana Deva was set up in the temple by Kolakkavan. During the next year, a copper image of Uma Parameswari, Goddess of Vrishabhavahana Deva was made and gifted by persons belonging to the Raja Raja Jananatha Therinja Parivara. An image of Devarkal Nayak Deva was gifted by the assembly of Kaliyuga Kanna Chaturvedimangalam in the fifteenth year of Raja Raja II. In the reign of his successor, provisions were made for burning lamps and reciting vedhas during procession of the above God, Devarkal Nayagan.

SPECIAL WORSHIPS:

Epigraphs refer to a number of special worships instituted by various kings and chieftains. During the birthday of

Asterism Aslesha of King Vira Rajendra, special offerings were conducted at the temple from the second year of the king. A cavalier of Rajendra II who was a native of Kattupalli Nyamam provided for offerings, bathing, feeding etc. A certain Vanadaraiyar instituted a special service in the temple in the reign of Konerinmaikondan. An undated record, on the Dakshinamurthy shrine states a certain Manunithi Kandan Akalanga Nagarasar gave a sarva-manya gift and instituted a special service called Nagarasan Sandhi. In the reign of Konerinmaikondan, a special worship named Adaya-valainthan Sandhi was instituted. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya who was called Ellarkkum Nayanar gifted land for service, festivals etc., instituted in his name. In the reign of another Pandya King, Sri Vallabha Deva, a special worship called Manangathan Sandhi was instituted by a certain Pichan Mazhavaraiyar. Jatavarman Kulasekhara gifted two velis of land for conducting the special Sandhi called Vala-thuval-Vittan Sandhi. Probably in the same reign, a certain Kulasekhara Thondaimanar instituted a special service. In the reign of Pandya Ruler, Konerimaikondan, Kaliyuga Raman, a special service called Kaliyugaraman Sandhi was instituted in the name of the king and provisions were made for bathing the God and the Nayanmars at the mouth of the river Cauvery.

QUEENS:

A number of queens of the Chola Emperors, recorded in the inscriptions, are seen making gifts of gold, lands, sheep etc. Parantakan Madevi alias Sembiyan Madevi, the mother of Uthama Chola and queen of Gandaraditya Chola gifted a number of images, jewels and vessels to the temple.

The queen of Uthama Chola gifted lamps to the temple. Vanavanmadevi alias Tribhuvana Madevi, the queen of Raja Raja, gifted thirty Kasu for a lamp. Another queen of Raja Raja named Kuttan Viraniyar made a gift of gold for offerings to the image of Natarajar. Nakkam Karukkamandal alias Panchavan Madeviyar gifted money for burning incenses etc., in the reign of Rajendra I. She was the queen of

Rajendra and was probably a Pandya princess. Araiyan Mambanangai, the mother of queen Thirailokya Madeviyar gifted lands to the temple in the reign of Rajadhi Raja. Nakkam Loka Chinthamani, the mother of queen Villavan Madeviyar gifted gold for a lamp to the same temple.

Besides the queens mentioned, a number of other ladies have also gifted valuables to the temple. A certain Sadhirayan Uthamasili, wife of Vinnadidaiyar gifted twenty-five Kazhanju of gold for a perpetual lamp. Another lady called Aruran Ambalathadigal gifted ninety sheep for a lamp. The inscription of Raja Raja registers a gift of land by purchase at Thiruppanangadu for lamps to the temple for the merit of Thiruvenkattu Nachiyar, daughter of Araiyan Udayanseithan alias Cholakonar, the headman of Mattur and wife of Thayilum Nalla Perumal alias Ilango Velan of Senthamangalam. A Brahmin lady of Vijaya Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam gifted lands for a lamp.

OTHER INTERESTING INFORMATION:

A few servants of Mulaparivara and Mula Parivara Vitteru of King Raja Raja gifted gold for Sengazhunir Thiruvasikai and gold flowers to the temple. A few officers of Raja Raja I gifted money for festivals in the month of Margazhi. In the reign of the Vijayanagar Ruler, Virupanna Udaiyar, Saka 1315 (1393 A.D.), the village at Thiruvambala Nallur once granted to the temple of Thiruvengadudaiya Nayanar was in ruins and that Mallarasar, son of Annamarasar rehabilitated it under the name of Viruparayam Pattinam and set a part from the monthly income to the temple. King Krishna Devaraya has gifted lands and revenues to the temple of Swetharanya Nathar.

In the reign of, probably Kulothunga III, three persons were proved traitors and their lands were confiscated and assigned to the temple. In the reign of Kulothunga III, a certain land lying fallow for many years was brought under cultivation and gifted to the

temple. In the reign of Sri Vallabha Pandya, the Pallava Chieftain Kopperunchinga was fighting against the Kannadikas (*Hoysalas*) who were building fortresses on the north bank of river Cauvery. As a result, the festivals of the temple were stopped. Sri Vallabha ordered the resumption of the festival and worship. In the reign of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, (1251-1270 A.D), a reference is made to a breach in the river Cauvery at Thirupattur and the consequent silting of the surrounding fields.

CHAYAVANAM

H/O MELAIYUR

Sri Chayavaneswaraswamy Temple

About eleven miles south-east of Sirkali and a mile away from Kaveripatnam where river Cauvery joins the sea, there exists a very ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Chayavaneswarar. The place is known as Chayavanam or Chaikkadu. It is a hamlet of the village called Melaiyur. The place is connected by bus service.

There are as many as eleven stone inscriptions here belonging to the Chola period. One of the inscriptions found here describes it as situated at Kaviripoompattinam in Nangoor Nadu while another describes the place as situated in Puhar Nadu. The village was, therefore, apparently a part of that great city.

The temple covers an area of about seventy cents. The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Chayavaneswarar is a Swayambu Lingam. In a separate sanctum stands His divine consort, Kodhaiyal. There is a separate sanctum for Devendra also. There are two prakarams and two sanctum sanctorum here, apart from Indra Vimanam. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the captivating image of Sri Chendhil Andavar in the posture of a warrior with bow and arrow in his

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7. Nandhi
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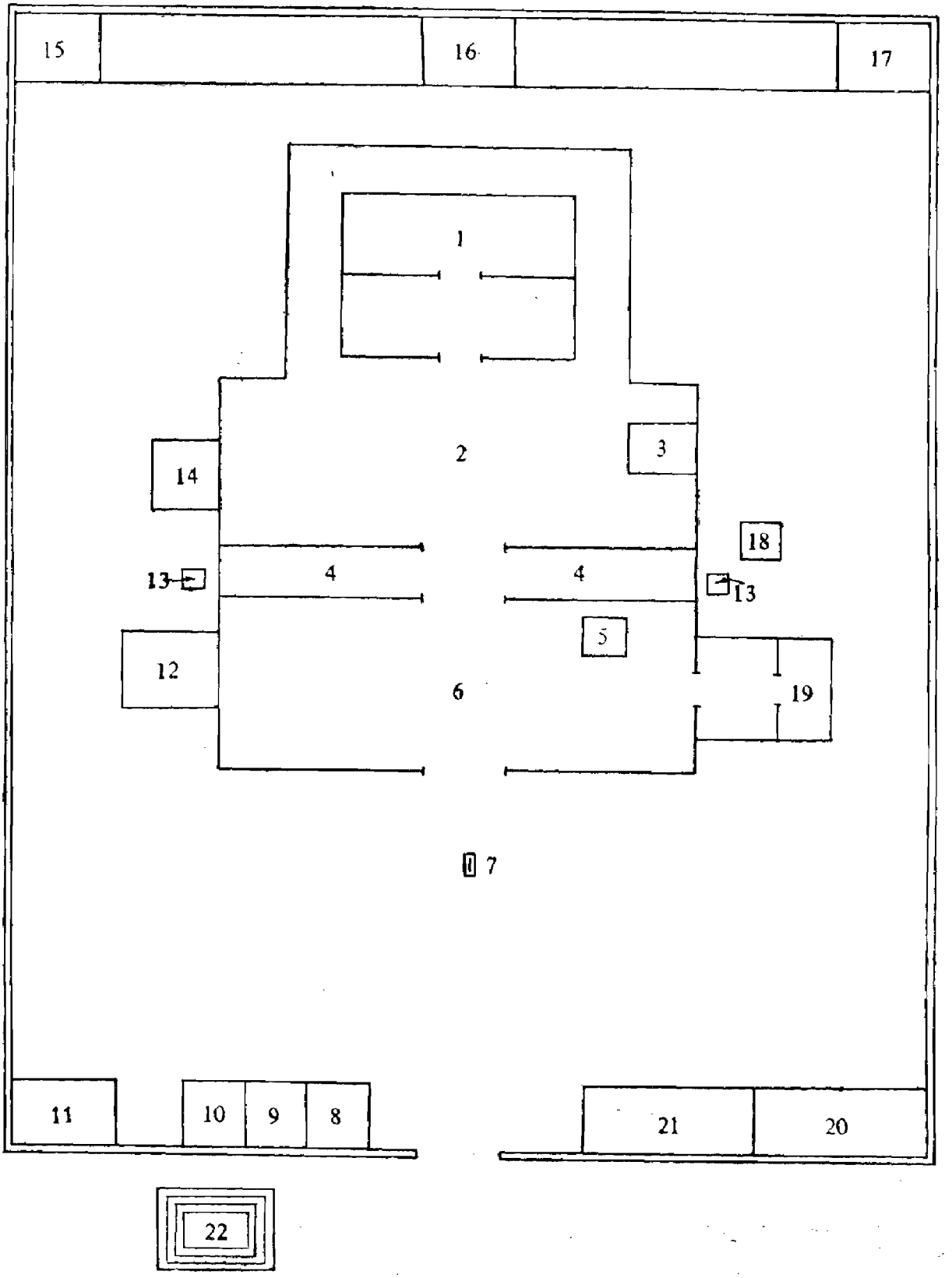
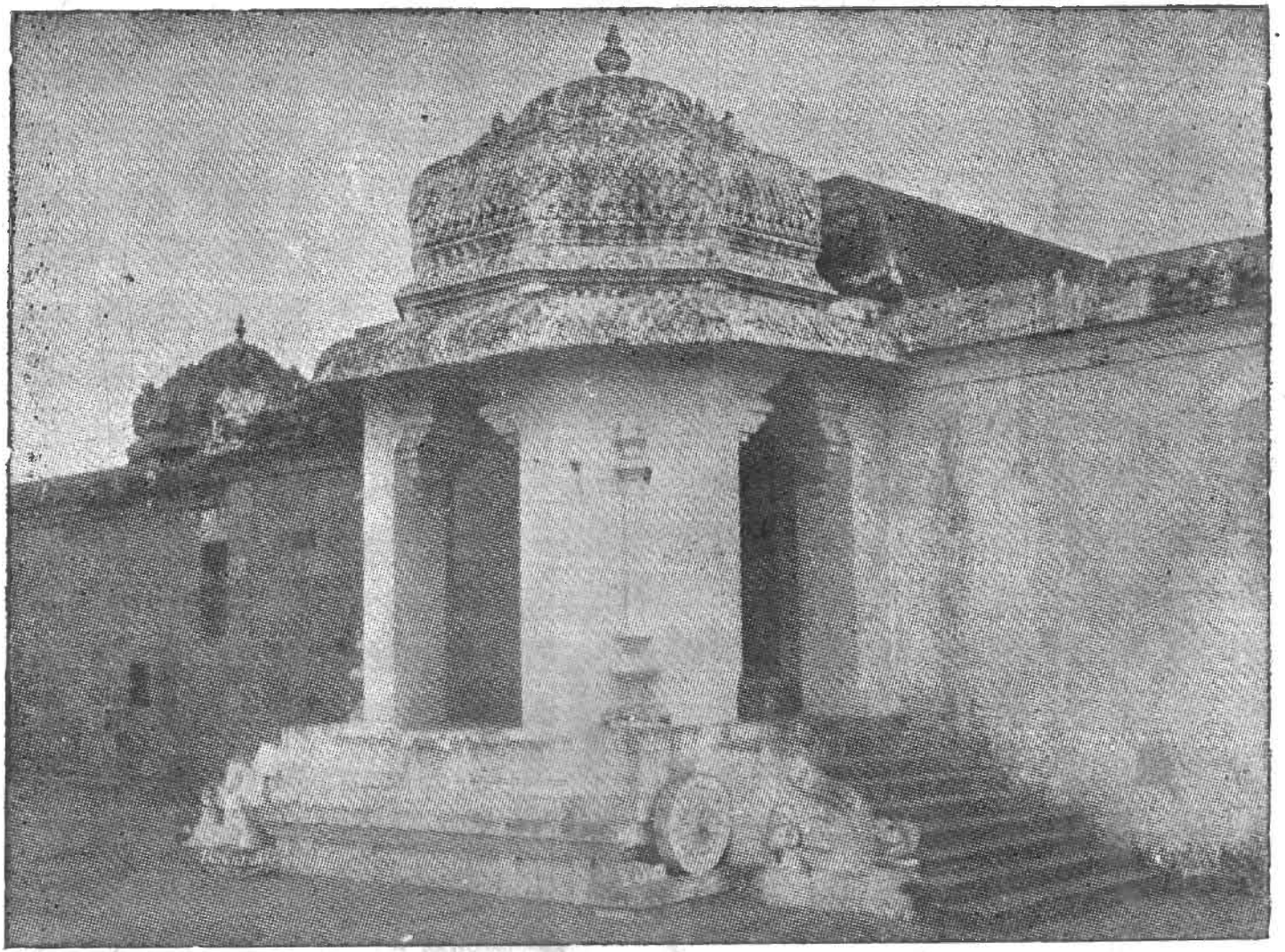
16. Subramaniar
17. Gajalakshmi
18. Chandikeswarar
19. Amman Sannadhi
20. Yagasalai
21. Navagrahas
22. Thirukkulam

SRI CHAYAVANESWARAR TEMPLE

CHAYAVANAM

(Not to Scale)





Sri Chayavaneswaraswamy Temple Vimanam
Chayavanam

hands. This image is said to have been discovered on the sea-shore. There is also another beautiful image here dedicated to Sri Sambadhy Amman, who is said to have been worshipped by Sri Manimekalai.

The famous Saints Gnanasambandhar, Thirunavukkarasar and Aiyadigal Kadavarkon have visited this shrine and composed several sacred Padhigams in praise of the Lord. The Sthala Puranam of the temple by Sri R. Panchanadham Pillai of Tiruchirappalli had been published recently.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests, who are paid a monthly salary from the temple revenues. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 1,000, of which the costly silver Nagabaranam of the Lord deserves special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about sixty-eight acres of wet lands and eighty six acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 17,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple as well as for its upkeep and general maintenance.

There are several vahanas here, viz., horse, rishabam, peacock, bandicoot etc., all made of wood. Indra Vizha in Chithirai, *Iyarpagai Nayanar* uthsavam for three days in Margazhi, Skandha Sashti, Navarathri, Vinayaga Chaturthi, Karthigai Deepam and Thiruvadhirai are the regular annual festivals celebrated here of which the Indra Vizha which spreads over a period of twenty-eight days commencing from the Chithira Pournami and the Iyarpagai Nayanar Uthsavam are the most important ones which attract thousands of devotees from the village and neighbourhood.

The sanctity of the place is explained by a legend in the Periya Puranam. It relates to Sri Iyarpagai Nayanar, one of the sixty-three Nayanmars or Saivite Saints of the south. The Nayanar is said to have been so extraordinarily charitable that he used to spend all his wealth for building temples and feeding *sadhus*. In order to test his charitable disposition, once Lord Siva came to him in the guise of an old man and

requested him to give his wife as a gift. Without any hesitation, Iyarpagai Nayanar satisfied the desire of the old man, but when his relatives protested, he had to accompany the God and his wife, so that they might safely leave the village. When they reached Nangoor, the God revealed Himself and gave the saint and his wife a place in the Heaven.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

INSCRIPTIONS

KINGS REPRESENTED : The following kings are represented in inscriptions :

Vikrama Chola (1120-1135 A.D.)

Kulothunga III (1179-1216 A.D.)

Raja Raja III and Maravarman Sundara Pandya.

The earliest inscription is dated in the reign of Vikrama Chola and the latest is dated Saka 1679 (1757 A.D.)

VILLAGE : The temple of Chaikkadu is said to be in Kaviripoompattinam in Nangoor Nadu, a sub-division of Rajadhi Raja Vala Nadu. An inscription of Vikrama Chola also refers to this village as Chayavanam in Pugar Nagar. In the Eighteenth Century, the names have changed and are recorded as Kaviripumpattinam in Kaviripumpattinamangalam, a sub-division of Thiruchaykkattur Sirmai.

THE DEITY : The name of the main deity is mentioned as Thiru Chaikkadu Udaiyar and Chayai Nayagar.

THE TEMPLE : The main shrine seems to have undergone renovation after the Thirteenth Century as the inscriptions of the period on the shrine are found damaged.

Raja Raja Chola III restored some lands to the temple and established a flower garden called Raja Rajan Thirunandha-

vanam. A minister of Chola King Vikrama Chola established a Mutt and presented lands to it. A certain Uttarapati Nayakan alias Thiruchaikkattuvelan, the headman of Vallam took on lease a land and a house and agreed to measure one Nali of pepper every day to the temple. The measure was called Chayavana Nali.

A certain Rajanarayana Muvenda Velan was the Royal Secretary of probably Kulothunga III. Panditha Chola Muvenda Velan was the Royal Secretary of Raja Raja III.

PALLAVANESWARAM

H/O MELAIYUR

Sri Pallavaneswarar Temple

At a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Sirkali is situated Pallavaneswaram. It is linked by bus with Akkur, the nearest railway station at a distance of about eleven kilometres. Pallavaneswaram forms part of Melaiyur Panchayat.

The temple which covers an area of about fifty-two cents has a beautiful five - tiered Rajagopuram which is under renovation. It has a single prakaram and two sanctum sanctorum, with a separate shrine for Sri Pattinathar. This is an ancient temple that has been renovated extensively. Its origin is not clear. The Kumbabishegam of this shrine was performed in the year 1958.

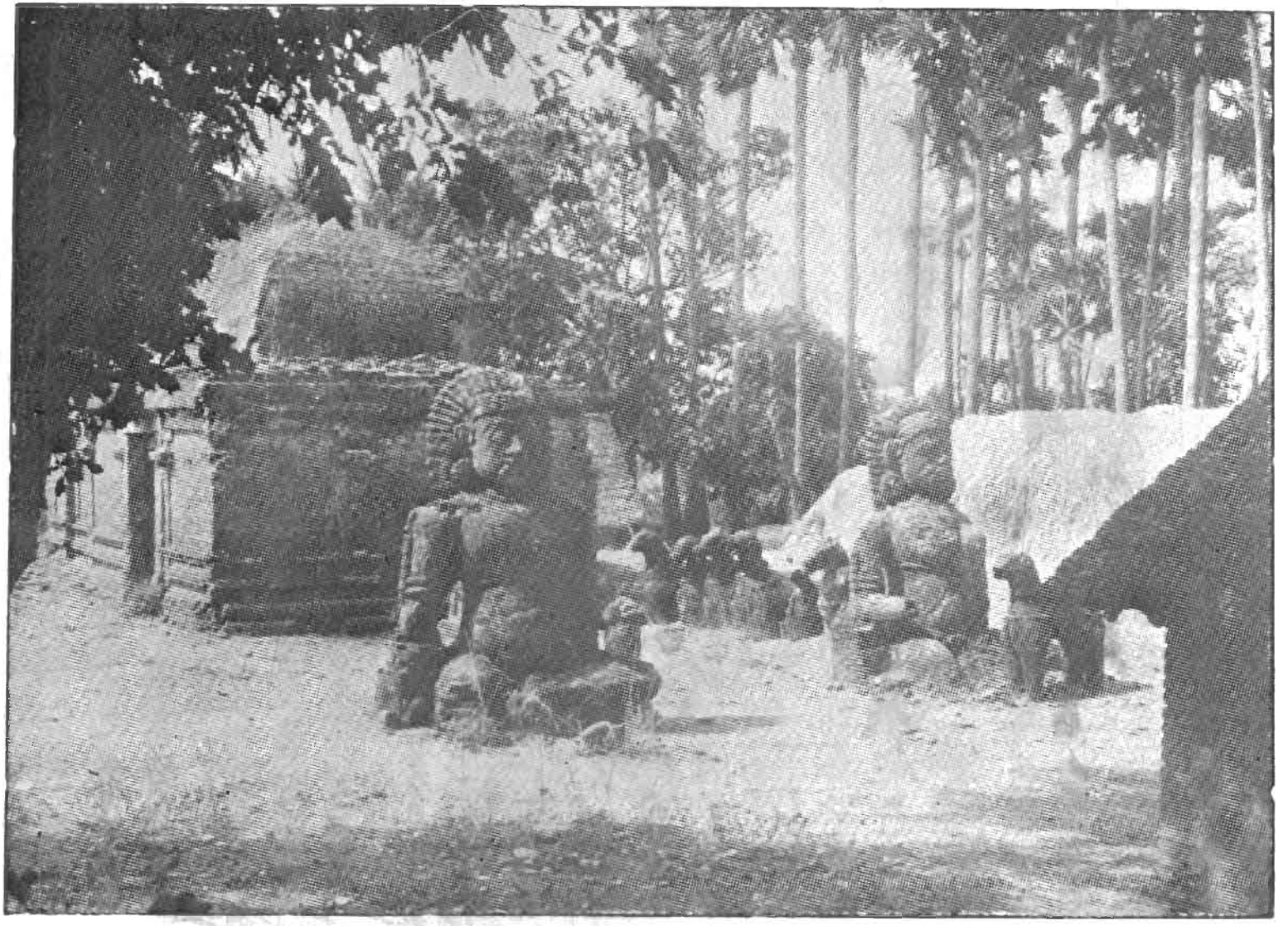
The Moolavar is a big installed Lingam. His divine consort is known as Sri Soundaryanayagi and Ghosham-bigai. There are fine carvings and sculptural work on the gopuram in front of Her sanctum. According to a legend, Indra tried to carry the Lingam from this temple by tying it to his car. The Goddess heard the sound (*Ghosham*) (hence Her name Ghoshambigai) and prevented it. At the

southern side of the temple, there is a stone structure resembling Indra's car with wheels and spokes. According to a legend, Indra brought Sambavathi Amman in his car and worshipped Her at this temple. There is a small portion on the right side of the entrance to Siva's temple where there is the idol of Sambavathi Amman worshipped even to day. It is said that this deity was worshipped by Madhavi and Manimekalai.

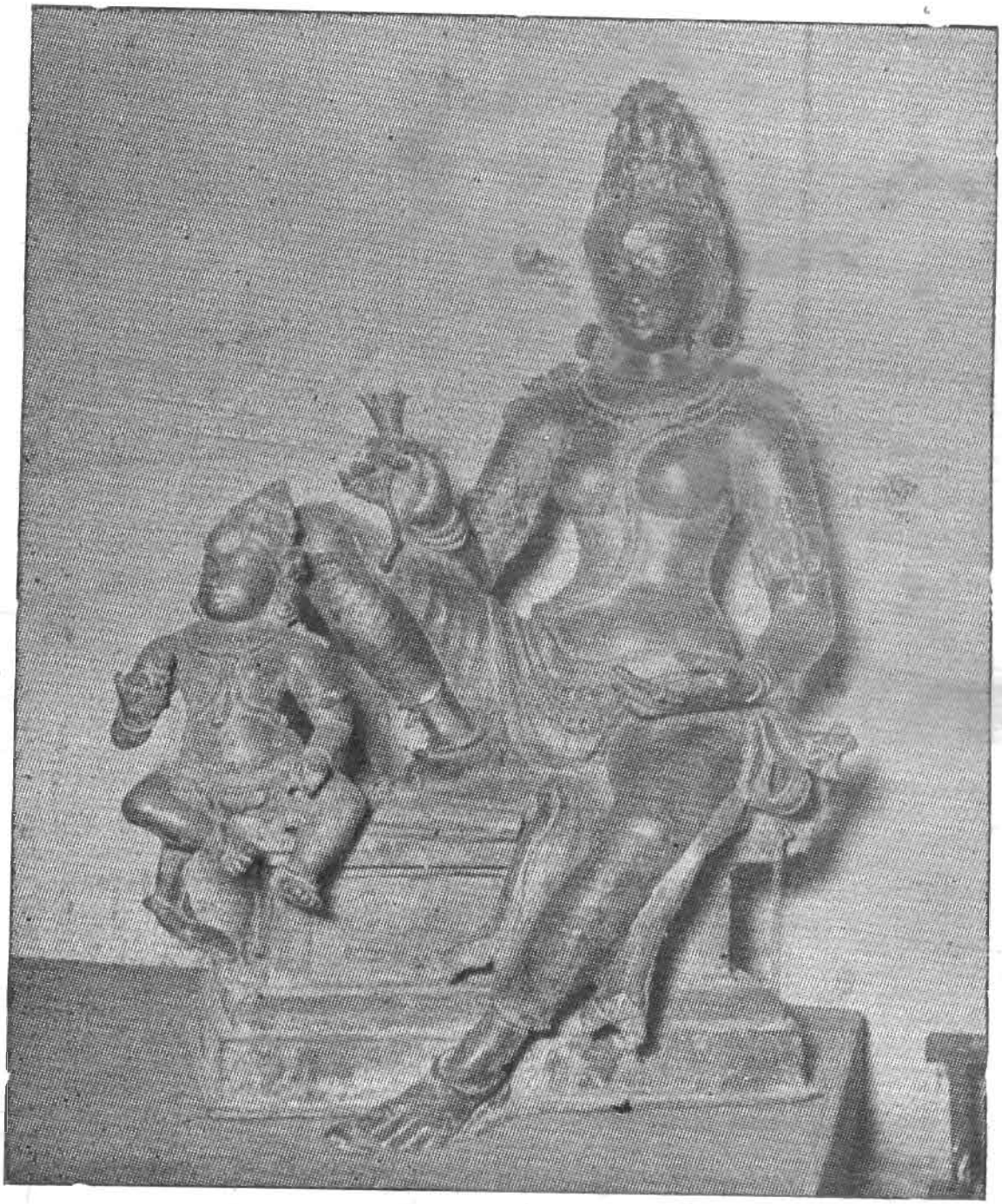
There is an idol of Subramaniar which is said to have been recovered from the sea according to R. K. Das (*Temples of Tamil Nadu*). This image has four hands, holding on the right hand the original "Vel" as it was recovered from the sea. On the other hand is "Vajravel." In the third hand are bow and arrow. In the fourth hand a flag and a Vel have been recently placed by a devotee.

According to a popular belief, this idol is supposed to be the idol of Subramaniar of Thiruchendur which was carried away by the Dutch Mariners in 1648. Their ship capsized and the idol came here floating. It was recovered at the confluence of the Cauvery with the sea near Kaveripatnam and installed in the temple. A remarkable feature about the idol is that to this day, it retains its gold lustre. The Vel is bright and artistically made. There are also several other festival idols here, all made of panchalogam. The Sthala Puranam of this temple has been edited by Sri Panchanadham Pillai of Tiruchirappalli.

Poojas are performed five times daily by non-hereditary priests who are paid a monthly salary from the temple revenues. The jewels in the temple are worth over Rs. 200. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 28.47 acres of wet and 32.95 acres of dry lands apart from five houses which fetch an annual income of Rs. 8,000 by way of rent. This income is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The temple owns a peacock, two rishabams and a horse vahanam, all made of wood.



Sambavathi Amman Kovil
Pallavaneswaram.



Guhambikai
Sri Pallavaneswaraswamy Temple
Pallavaneswaram.

Navarathri, Skandha Sashti and Pattinathar Thiruvizha are the regular festivals celebrated here every year, of which the Pattinathar Thiruvizha which takes place in the month of Adi with very great eclat is the most important one. About 2,000 devotees congregate here on this occasion.

Pallavaneswaram is hallowed by the birth of the great Saint Pattinathar. Sambandhar has immortalised this shrine in his Thevaram. Kovalan and Kannaki celebrated in the Silappadhigaram are said to have been born here. The temple has a number of inscriptions.

A single Trustee and an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

MAYURAM TALUK

THERAZHUNDUR

Sri Amaruviyappan Temple

Therazhundur where the great Tamil poet Kambar was born has been from the *Sangam Age* a place celebrated in the Tamil classics. It is also known as Krishnaranyam, Azhundur and Thiruvazhundur. Situated at about twelve kilometres from Mayuram, Therazhundur railway station is between Malliyam and Kutralam railway stations. Therazhundur Temple is about three kilometres to the south of the railway station. There is frequent bus service from Mayuram to this place. The population of the village according to 1961 Census is 2,329.

The Vaishnavite temple of Sri Amaruviyappan in Therazhundur is one of the oldest temples. It is situated in the centre of the village. The tank in the front adds to the beauty of the temple. Sri Devadhirajan is the presiding deity of the temple. He is also known as *Gochanhan* or Amaruviyappan.

The impressive ten feet high image of Lord Devadhirajan in the sanctum sanctorum faces east. The greatness of the presiding deity has been sung by Sri Thirumangai Alwar. The beautiful festival image of Sri Amaruviyappan with Bhu Devi and Sri Devi is true to the apostle's praise "*Thiruvukkum Thiruvagia Selva*".

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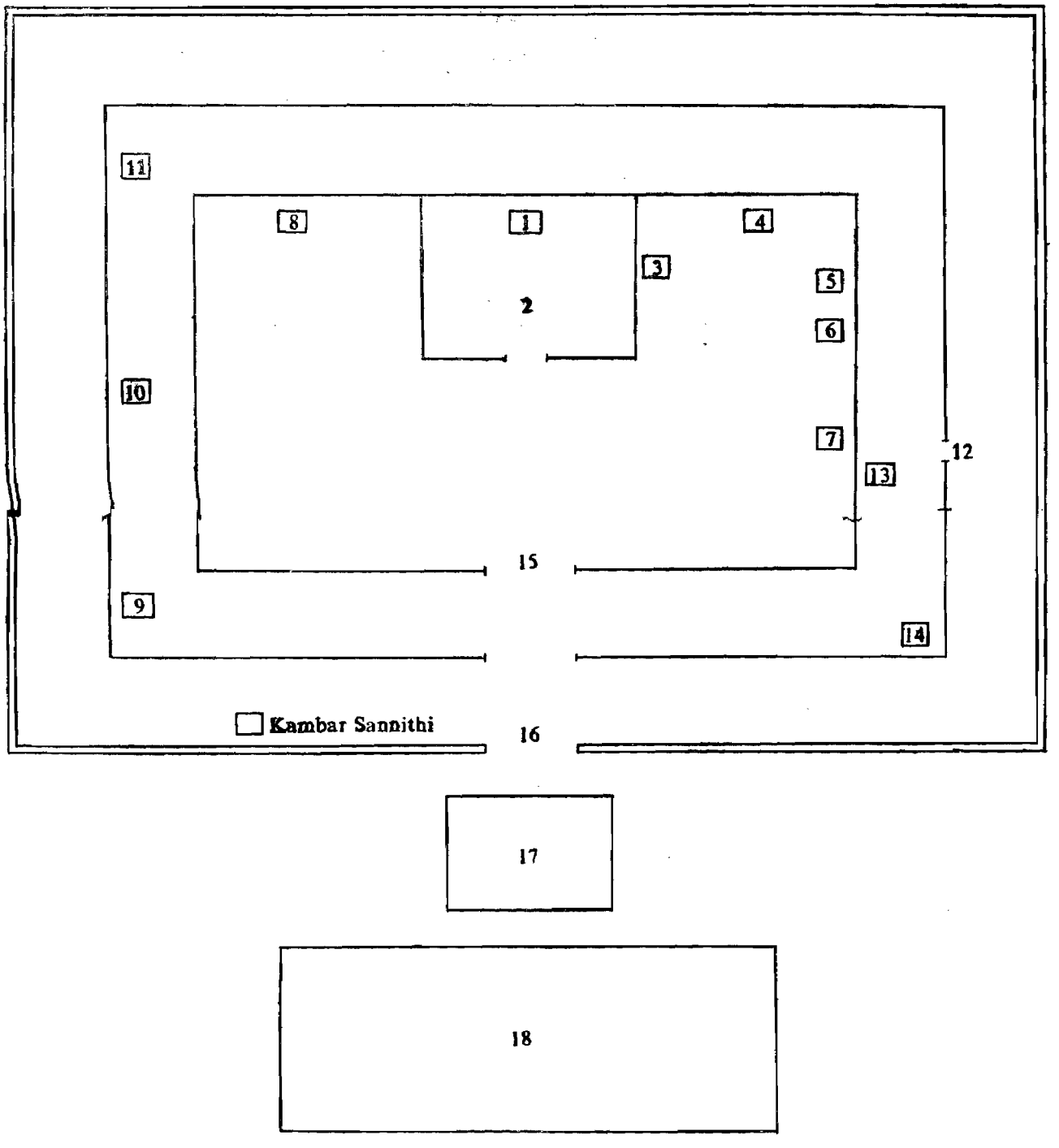
16. Front Gopuram
17. Oonjal Mandapam
18. Darsha Pushkarani

SRI AMARUVIAPPAN TEMPLE

THERALANDUR

(Not to Scale)



திருவுக்கும் திருவாகிய செல்வா !
தெய்வத்துக் கரசே ! செய்யகண்ணு !
உருவச்செஞ் சுடராழி வல்லானே !
உலகுண்ட ஒருவா ! திருமார்பா !!
ஒருவற்காற்றி உய்யும் வகையின்றுல்
உடனின்று ஐவரெனுள் புகுந்தொழியாது
அருவித்தின்றிட அஞ்சி நின்னடைந்தேன்
அழுந்தூர்மேல் திசைநின்ற அம்மானே !

— பெரிய திருமொழி.

The Goddess, Senkamalavalli Thayar faces east and is in sitting posture. Moved by her graceful visage, Thirumangai Alwar had sung the *Pasuram* beginning with the words " *Senkamala Thirumagalum* ".

செங்கமலத் திருமகளும் புவியும்
செம்பொன் திருவடியினேவருட முனிவரேத்த
வங்கமலி தடங்கடலுள் அனந்தனென்னும்
வரியரவின் அணைத்துயின்ற மாயோன்காண்மின்
எங்குமலி நிறைபுகழ் நால்வேதம், ஐந்து
வேள்விகளும் கேள்விகளும் இயன்றதன்மை
அங்கமலத் தயனனேயார் பயிலும் செல்வத்து
அணியழுந்தூர் நின்றுகந்த அமரர்கோவே

— பெரிய திருமொழி.

The other deities in the temple are Sri Ramar, Vasudevar, Hanumar, Alwars, Andal, Desigar and Vishwaksenar. As one crosses the first tower entrance and turns to the left one will find the sanctum of Kambar. Old and new images of Kambar and his wife could be seen here. The small but beautiful tank before the temple is known as *Darsa Pushkarani*. A bath in this tank is considered sacred. Gajendra Pushkarani is another sacred tank, a little away from the temple on the northern side.

A number of festivals are celebrated in this temple, of which the ten-day Brahmothsavam in the Tamil month of Vaikasi is the most important. Silver Garuda, Anjaneyar,

Adisesha, Surya Prabhai, Indra Vimanam, horse and elephant are the mounts used for the Lord. For the Goddess, the mounts used are Surya Prabhai, Yali, Swan, elephant and lion. The sub-temples of this shrine are Govindarajar Temple, Aranganathar Temple and Alwar Temple.

Therazhundur's greatness is also due to the fact that Kambar was born here. Kambanmedu, a mound close to the temple on the southern side is a place of archæological importance. The annual Kamban festival celebrated here for three days in the Tamil month of Panguni attracts thousands of people from far and near. Owing to the association of the great bard with this temple, the festival is organised by the temple authorities.

The temple walls contain a number of informative inscriptions. There are two artistic images in the temple. The image of Goddess Lakshmi on the rear side of the vimanam over the sanctum of Senkamalavalli Thayar is a beautiful work of art. There is another rare and beautiful image on the same vimanam on the side facing north. Goddess Lakshmi is depicted with eight shoulders and four faces.

Therazhundur is one of the five places held sacred of Sri Krishna. In the sanctum sanctorum, Garuda's image is near the Lord. So one cannot find Garudazhvar opposite to the Lord as is usually found in other temples.

The temple gets an annual income of about Rs. 48,600 from its immovable property consisting of 219·62 acres of wet and 54·78 acres of dry lands, a few sites and houses. The ancient jewels of the temple are worth about Rs. 39,000.

According to a legend, Lord Brahma once playfully brought a herd of cows which was under the care of young Krishna to this place without the latter's knowledge. Unperturbed by this, Sri Krishna created another herd and none knew what had happened. The disappointed Brahma apologised to Sri Krishna and entreated Him to

take His abode in Theruazhundur. Accordingly, Sri Krishna's Temple came up here as the temple of *Amaru viyappan* ('Aah'-(cow)-Maruviya-Appan). The images of cow and a calf near the festival idol signify this incident.

There are a few more legends concerning Sri Devadhi Rajan which have been detailed in the Tamil booklet on this shrine written by Professor K. S. Nagarajan and published by the Temple Devasthanam.

The temple is managed by three Trustees and an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

VALLALAR KOIL

H/O MAYURAM

Sri Vadhanyeswaraswamy Temple

This small Siva temple is situated on the northern bank of the river Cauvery in Uthara Mayuram. The place where the temple is situated is familiarly known as Vallalar Koil. It is noted for its famous Dakshinamurthy shrine which attracts a large number of devotees on every Thursday. The main pagoda of this temple dedicated to Sri Vadhanyeswarar who is a Swayambu Lingam faces west. The divine consort here is known as Sri Gnanambigai and Her sannadhi faces south. There is a small and attractive shrine for Her.

The Yogic posture and the *Gnana Mudra* of Lord Vadhanyeswarar seated on Nandhi suggests the *upadesa* pose and Parvathi is called here as Gnanambigai.

The temple which covers an area of about 1·50 acres has a beautiful gopuram in the front. It is linked with several other sacred centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Mayuram at a distance of about four kilometres. The origin of the temple is unknown and it is said that a

Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1957 by the Dharmapura Adheenam. There are two prakarams and two sancta. Four beautiful vimanams add to the serenity and charm of the shrine. There are several sub-deities and a number of uthsava vigrahams for Swamy, Ambal, Somaskandhar, Dakshinamurthy, Gangai Amman etc.

There is a separate shrine for Sri Medha Dakshinamurthy to the southern side of the main sanctum of the Lord. He is seen sitting in *Yoga Asana* with the right hand in *Gnana Mudra* and the left holding a book. The unique feature of this Dakshinamurthy is that He is seated on Nandhi. There is also a stone Nandhi in front of Him.

The tank adjoining the temple goes by the name of Gnanamirtha *Saras*. It is also called Pancha Brahma Theertham. It is believed that those who take bath in this Theertham on Karthigai *Somavaram* (Mondays) will be blessed with peace and plenty. There are also sannadhis for Vigneswarar, Subramaniar, Durgai and Saneeswarar.

The Lord is called Vadhanyeswarar or Vallalar. Vallalar means one who gives abundantly to His devotee, the seeker. Here the Lord is known as *Kai Kattum Vallalar*—the Lord who shows the hand representing *Gnanam* or wisdom in the form of offering Upadesam. A few miles west off Mayuram at Moovalur is the *Vazhi Kattum Vallalar* (Lord who shows the way or *Marga Sagayar*. Here the Lord is said to have guided Indra, Vishnu and Kubera who lost their way while travelling as hunters. At Vilanagar, a few miles to the east, is the *Thurai Kattum Vallalar* (Lord who showed Saint Sambandhar the way to cross the river Cauvery which was in spate.) In the south, a few miles from Mayuram, there is a place known as Peruncheri where the Lord gave the power of speech to Guru and came to be known as *Vageesar*. These four sacred places are around Mayuram. The river Cauvery flows in the middle of the town of Mayuram; on the south it is known as Dakshina Mayuram and on the north Uthara Mayuram.

Legend has it that the Lord humbled the proud Rishabadeva and initiated him into the mysteries of the Divine Wisdom. As Rishabadeva felt haughty since he was the vahana of the Lord, Siva threw a hair of his sacred locks on the back of Rishabadeva who at once groaned under its heavy weight. He sought the mercy of the Lord who not only pardoned him but also blessed him with Divine Wisdom. So even when the Lord took the form of Guru or Gurumurthi, Rishabadeva was permitted to serve as His mount.

The punished Nandhi begged the Lord to forgive him and requested upadesa—*Siva Gnana Upadesa.* The Lord made him to stay at Mayuram in the middle of the river Cauvery and said that the Ganges and other rivers would flow into the Cauvery on the New Moon day in the month of Ayppasi, when he could have his upadesam at Uthara Mayuram. Hence the river came to be known as Rishaba Theertham at that spot. Devotees believe that Goddess Ganges comes here on the particular day to wash off all the sins deposited into her by millions of bathers from all over the country. It is believed that Ganga Devi is freed from all sins and impurities by having a dip in the Cauvery and having a sacred darshan of Sri Medha Dakshinamurthy and Lord Vadhanyeswarar.

The sannadhi of Sri Medha Dakshinamurthy attracts the attention of one and all on every Thursday when the Lord is adorned with the gold kavacham, valued about Rs. 35,000. A Koti Archana was performed to the Lord in 1958. Every year in the month of Karthigai, a Maha Abishegam is done to the Lord. Special Abishegas are also performed when the planet Guru moves from one Zodiac to the other. Apart from this Moola Vigraham, there is a fine bronze image of Dakshinamurthy in this temple. It is taken in procession on the New Moon Day in the month of Ayppasi.

Medha means Gnana or Wisdom. So Medha Dakshinamurthy here is said to exhibit *His Gnana Swaroopam* or form of wisdom. He sits facing south, under a huge Banyan Tree

with the crescent Moon adorning his locks. The crescent Moon represents the growth of Gnanam or Wisdom. Time moves on, but Dakshinamurthy is always young. Four Rishis are seen sitting at His feet. They are awaiting the grant of the supreme knowledge by the Lord. The notable thing here is that the teacher is young and the disciples very old, a deviation from the normal course of things in the world where the Guru is generally older than his disciples. Strangely enough He sits silent. A Guru must teach his disciples. This Guru teaches through His silence. The moment the disciples see Him, their doubts are cleared. The Lord has adorned Himself with the crescent Moon, Ganga, Fire and Holy Ash. His right hand shows the Gnana Mudra and He holds a book in His left. Ignorance in the form of a demon lies under His feet, completely subdued. The four Rishis represent humanity.

Uthara Mayura Mahatmiyam in Sanskrit gives the history of this place in twenty chapters of which the *Upadesa Chapter* is the most important. Maha Vidwan Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai has sung the Sthala Puranam in Tamil. Sri La Sri Sivagnana Desiga Swamigal, the Tenth Maha Sannidhanam of Dharmapuram has also sung the praise of Lord Dakshinamurthy in ten stanzas which go by the name "Sri Dakshinamurthy Thiruvarutpa".

Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary Brahmin priests according to the principles of the Karana Agamam. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 75,000. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 134.41 acres of wet lands, 28·62 acres of dry lands, two houses, four shops and nineteen coconut trees which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 26,000. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 200 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 700 per annum. There are two chapparams and a silver Kailasa Parvatham apart from vahanas such as horse, peacock and rishabam. Another unique mount viz., the crocodile (*Makara*) is used for carrying the Goddess Ganga to the Cauvery on the *Kadaimukham* day when it is believed that the Cauvery at Mayuram becomes as holy as Ganges.

Brahmothsavam in Ayppasi, Adi Pooram, Navarathri, Karthigai Deepam and Thiruvadhirai are the regular annual festivals celebrated, of which the ten-day Ayppasi Brahmothsavam is the most important one attracting about 10,000 devotees from in and around Mayuram.

The affairs of the temple are managed by a Superintendent appointed by the Adheena Kartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

MAYURAM

I. Sri Mayuranathaswamy Temple

Mayuram, the noted town on the Madras-Tiruchi main line is also a place of pilgrimage. The annual *Thula* festival during October-November is very popular. There is a beautiful temple dedicated to Lord Siva in the town. The town derives its name from this temple of Sri Mayuranathaswamy. The population of the town according to 1961 Census is 51,393. The place was also known as *Thirumayiladuthurai* in the past.

The presiding deity is a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is known as Abhayapradhambikai, Abhayambikai, Anjalanayaki, Anjalai etc., meaning one who gave refuge to the pea-hen.

The inspiring temple which measures 719 feet by 527 feet has a nine-storeyed imposing gopuram, 164 feet high on the eastern entrance. There are five prakarams, two sancta and fourteen beautiful vimanams with plaster figures on them, apart from several artistically carved granite pillars. The ancient temple is said to have been built during the period of the famous Chola kings who ruled over this place. About 400 years ago renovation was made by the then Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam and a Kumbabishegam was performed.

There are three small shrines here dedicated to Sri Vinayagar, viz., Periya Vinayagar also known as Sthala Vinayagar enshrined on the southern side of the flag-mast, Agasthya Vinayagar said to have been installed and worshipped by Sage Agasthya himself and *Kalanjia Pillaiyar* i.e., Granary Vinayagar who was probably the guardian deity of the granary. He is enshrined near the temple granary. There are also small shrines dedicated to other deities of which, the one for Lord Natarajar deserves mention.

Poojas are performed six times daily by hereditary Brahmin priests. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 1,00,000 mostly donated by devotees. The *Jadainagam* of the Ambal made of precious stones is a costly jewel.

The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 1,500 acres of both wet and dry lands and twelve houses. The assessed income is about Rs. 1,65,000. This sum is utilised towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance.

The temple is running a *Thevara Padasala* for educating poor children on religious lines. The hundi collections of the temple amount to about Rs. 1,000 per annum. The temple owns a big car, a ratham and several vahanas made of silver and wood.

Navarathri, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Karthigai, Skandha Sashti, Thula Uthsavam in Ayppasi and the Vaikasi Brahmothsavam are the regular annual festivals celebrated of which the Vaikasi Brahmothsavam for ten days and the Thula Uthsavam in Ayppasi month are the most important festivals when a very large crowd of about a lakh from far and near congregate here.

The Mango Tree is the Sthala Viruksham and the legend goes to say that when the Devi performed penance in the form of a pea-hen, she consumed the leaves of the Mango

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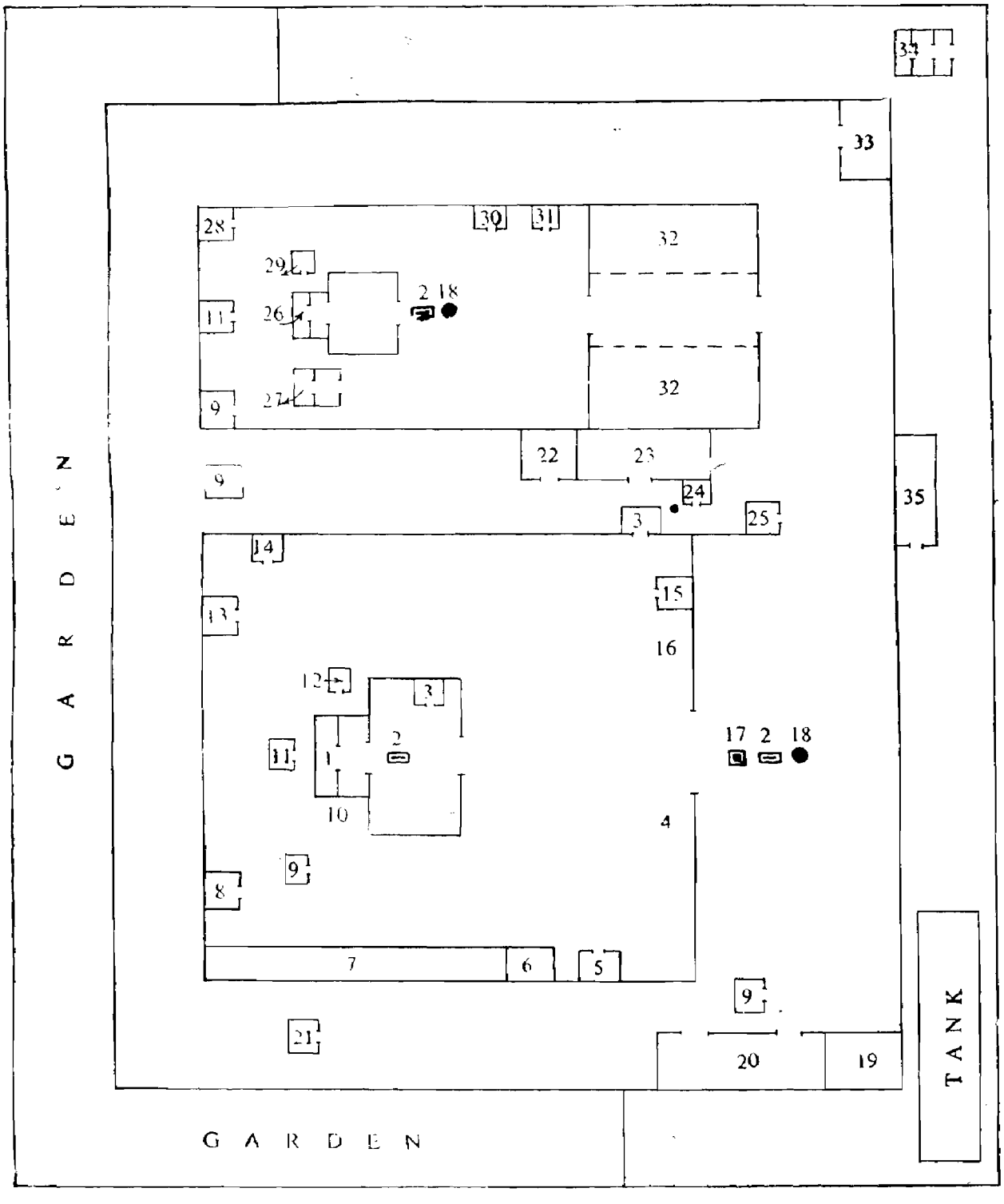
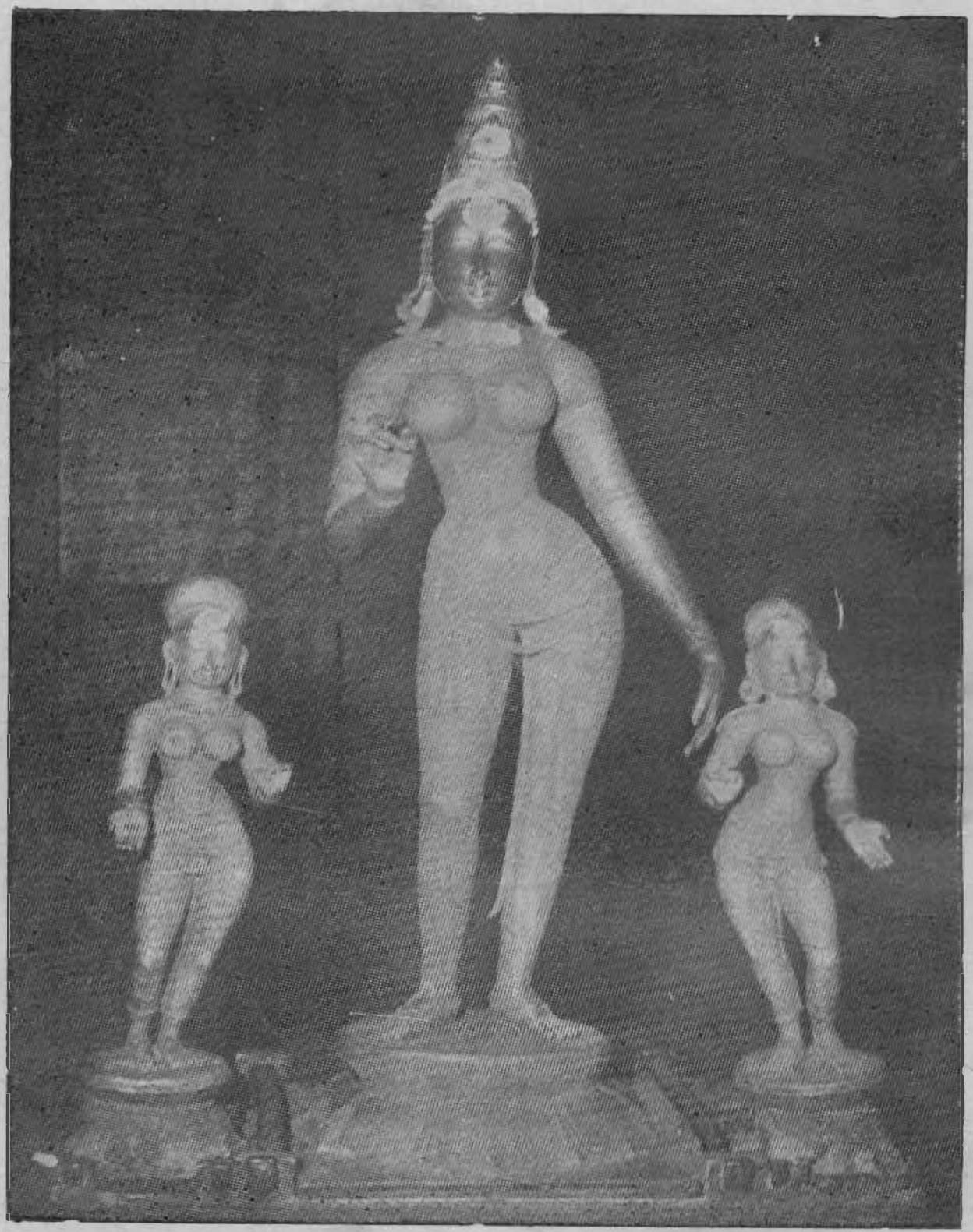
SRI MAYURANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

MAYURAM

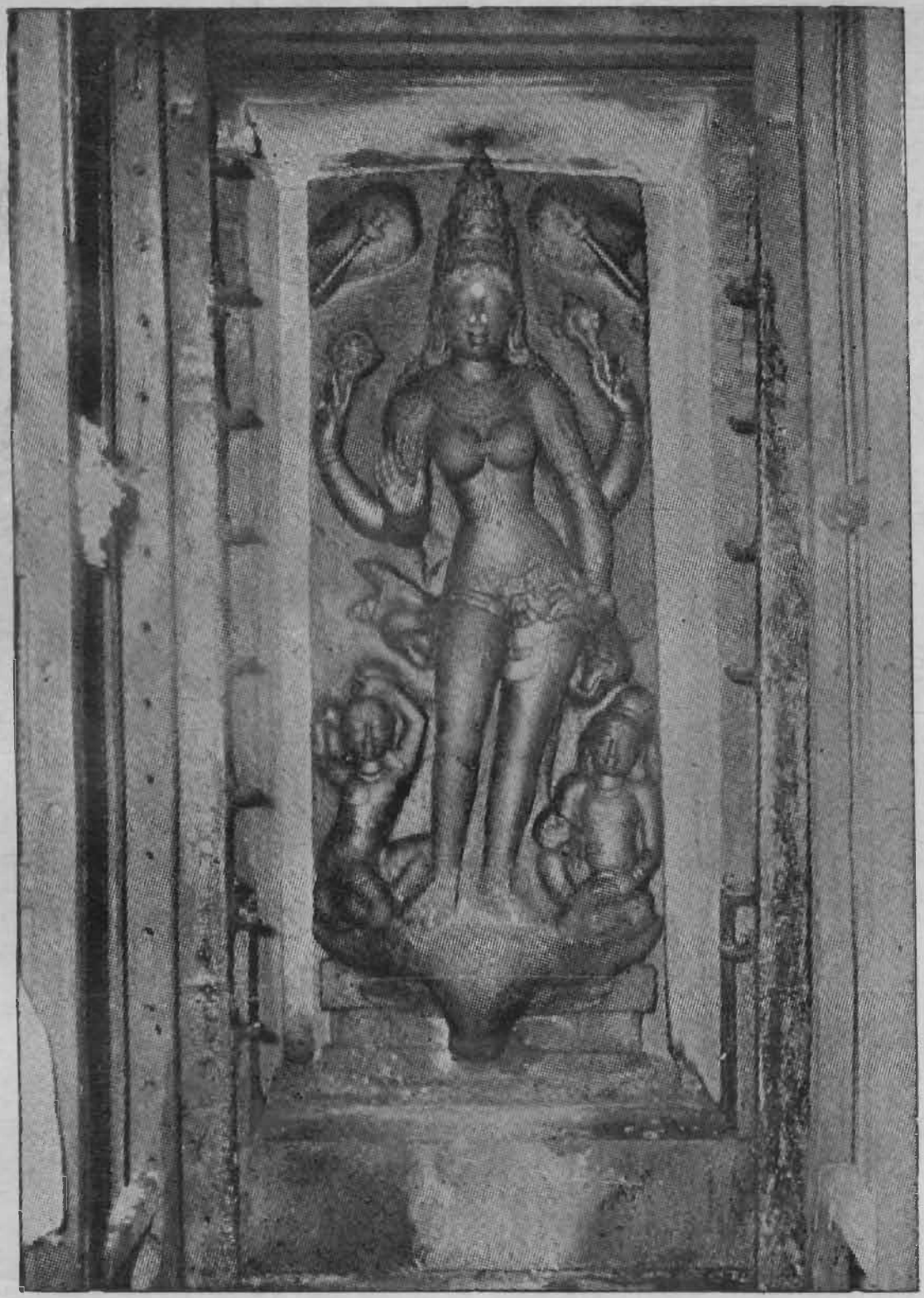
(Not to Scale)



Sri Mayuranathaswamy Temple and Tank
Mayuram.



Devi Abayambigai Amman
Sri Mayuranathaswamy Temple
Mayuram.



Goddess Durga
Sri Mayuranathaswamy Temple
Mayuram.

Goddess 'Mayil Amman'
Sri Mayuranathaswamy Temple
Mayuram.

Tree. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have sung in praise of the Lord and Ambal.

It is said that Lord Brahma, Goddess Lakshmi, Indra, Dharmar, Manmatha, Brahaspathi, great saints like Agasthya and other celestial beings and even animals and birds such as cat, parrot, wolf, elephant and horse have worshipped the Lord of Mayuram and attained eternal bliss. Of these, the anecdotes connected with the worship of Parvathi, Nathasarma and Anavitai are popular.

According to the legend, Daksha did not invite his daughter Sathi to the Yaga that he conducted. This enraged the Lord who sent Veerabadhra to desecrate the sacrifice conducted by Daksha and instructed Sathi not to attend the Yaga. However, the Devi attended the Yaga disobeying the Lord's words. While the Yaga was being desecrated by Veerabadhra, a pea-hen got injured and it immediately ran to Sathi and took refuge in her. After the completion of the Yaga, Sathi Devi repented very much for having disobeyed the Lord. To wash off this sin, she entered the sacrificial fire. While doing so, she was thinking about the pea-hen to which she gave refuge and so in the next birth she took the form of a pea-hen and came to this place. Thereupon she performed a severe penance for many years and at last rejoined Lord Siva. This sthalam, therefore, came to be known as Mayuram or Mayavaram. (*Mayuram* means pea-hen).

Long long ago, there lived an ardent Saivite devotee by name Nathasarma. He and his wife Anavitai desired to merge themselves with the feet of Lord Siva. With this desire in view, they undertook a pilgrimage and after visiting several sacred shrines of Siva reached Mayavaram. Following a dream he had, Nathasarma installed a Siva Lingam on the left side of the Lord and his wife installed another one to the right side of the Ambal. Both of them performed severe penance for several years and finally their cherished desire was fulfilled. From then onwards it was customary for all devotees who visit the temple to offer worship first at the shrines of Nathasarma Lingam (Linga

worshipped by Nathasarma) and Anavitai Eswarar (Linga worshipped by Anavitai) before offering worship to the Lord as they believe that without doing this they cannot please Lord Mayuranatha and get their prayers fulfilled. In memory of Anavitai the Linga installed by her is being dressed and decorated even today with a sari just as Goddesses are adorned.

There are several holy Theerthams here besides the river Cauvery which flows nearby. Of these the Rishaba Theertham is the most important one. It is a big bathing ghat in the Cauvery river itself. Legend says that once Lord Siva was very much annoyed with the behaviour of Nandhi, His chief attendant who had become arrogant. In great anger, Siva pushed him down to this place on the Cauvery. So this particular place came to be known as Rishaba Theertham. It is also called as *Thula Ghat* where devotees flock in large numbers to take their holy bath and perform obsequies to their deceased ancestors in the month of Ayppasi (i.e., October-November). It is also believed that the Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna visit this place and mix with the Rishaba Theertham on the day of the New Moon occurring in Ayppasi month. It is popularly said that a pot of water taken from this Theertham on this auspicious day can be preserved for any number of years without the water getting spoiled. Thousands of orthodox Hindus take their bath at this Rishaba Theertham during *Thula Masam* and also on the first day of Karthigai month.

It is said that Lord Mayuranathaswamy took the form of a peacock and danced with His divine consort Uma Devi who worshipped Him in the form of a pea-hen and this is known as *Gowri Thandavam*.

It is also said that the Lord of this place convoked a great assembly called *Mahasabai* here and married Uma Devi who attained her original form leaving that of the pea-hen. To commemorate this, a marriage festival is conducted on one day during the Ayppasi month.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the head of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions have been copied from the Mayuranathaswamy Temple and Panchanadiswara Temple of this village.

I. MAYURANATHASWAMY TEMPLE :

The following kings are referred to in the inscriptions.
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A. D.)
Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1270 A. D.)

THE DEITY : The main deity of the temple is referred to as Thirumayiladuthurai Udaiyar.

GIFTS : One of the inscriptions of Raja Raja III dated in his fourteenth regnal year records the gift of land to the shrine of the Goddess called *Thiruppalliarai Nachiyar.*

II. PANCHANADISWARA TEMPLE :

Kings represented :
Kulothunga III.
Thirubhuvana Chakravarti.
Konerinmaikondan probably identical with Kulothunga III.

THE VILLAGE : The village is referred to as Kulothunga Chola Nallur alias Kulothunga Cholan Kutralam in Thiruvazhundur Nadu, a sub-division of Jayamkonda Chola Valanadu.

DEITY : The name of the main deity is referred to as Thiruvaiyaru Udaiyar. Most of the inscriptions refer to the gift of land to the temple of Thiruvaiyaru Udaiyar. An inscription in the nineteenth year refers to the gift of land to the image of Thiruvaiyaru Udaiyar set up at Kulothunga Chola Nallur.

A number of inscriptions in this temple refer to the twenty first year of *Sungam Thavirtharulina Kulothunga Chola.*

It is not known how epigraphs relating to the temple in Kutralam are found in this temple.

II. Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy Temple

Mayuram is noted for another ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy who is a Pradhishta Lingam here. The divine consort is known as Visalakshi Amman or Annapoorani Amman. This is one of the several Saivite temples under the control of the Dharmapura Adheenam. This shrine is close to the Thula bathing ghat. Pilgrims who take a holy dip in the sacred Cauvery make it a point to worship the presiding deity of this hoary shrine.

The temple is at a distance of about two kilometres from Mayuram junction. It spreads over an area of about fifty seven cents. It has a prakaram, three sancta and three beautiful vimanams constructed in the type similar to the Viswanathaswamy Temple in Benares. It is said that the temple was built during the period of Chola Kings. Extensive renovations were made recently by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam and a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1955. There are separate sancta for Sri Thondi Vinayagar and Bala Dhandayuthapaniswamy. There are also several festival idols of Swamy, Ambal and others. The festival idol of Natarajar is of good workmanship.

An idol of Vinayagar made of white marble stone brought from Benares has been installed in front of the Dwajasthambam. This was done at the time of the renovation in the year 1955.

Poojas are performed four times daily by Brahmin priests according to the principle of the Agama Sastras. They are paid a monthly salary from the temple revenues.

The temple owns jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 12,000. There are beautiful silver kavachams for Sri Bala Dhandayudhapaniswamy and Visalakshi Ambal.

The landed properties of the temple comprise 20·49 acres which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 4,000. This sum is utilised for the daily poojas and periodical festivals in the temple as well as for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are two fifty years old silver rishaba vahanas.

The famous Thula Uthsavam in the month of Ayppasi is the only important annual festival celebrated here, when about a lakh of devotees from far and near congregate.

The affairs of the temple are managed by a Superintendent appointed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple. Mayuram with its sacred temples and the holy river Cauvery is popular with the devotees as the Benares of the South.

VAZHUVUR

Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of about ten kilometres from Mayuram on the Mayuram-Thiruvarur road is Vazhuvur, one of the reputed "*Ashta Veerattams*" (i.e., places associated with Lord Siva's dance). The place can also be reached by walk from Elandangudy railway station a kilometre away. It is believed that this village was left unaffected during the deluge and hence it came to be known as Vazhuvur which literally means a place which alone lived. The population of the village according to 1961 Census is 2,981.

Some hold that this place also known as *Vadhavur* was hallowed by the birth of Saint Manickavasagar. In this connection it may be mentioned that another village in Madurai district also claims to be his birth place. The story of *Vadhavurar* spending the King's treasure in building a temple is well known.

Though a little town, Vazhuvur is noted for its celebrated, Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple. The place which is referred to as Vazhugur in the inscripticns is also known as Chuthapuri, Para Kailasam, Gnana Bhccmi and Fillaranyam in Sanskrit.

There are as many as fifteen interesting stone inscriptions here belonging to the period of Chola and other rulers of the region. These throw light on the handsome endowments made by the kings to the shrine from time to time. Most of the inscriptions belong to Chola period dating from 1160-1276 A. D. Two of them record the construction of a gopuram (tower) and walls and the gift of a street. Another refers to the reclamation of certain lands submerged by the Cauvery floods and their cultivation under certain concessions. Yet another shows that in 1434 a tank and an irrigation channel were constructed and the temple income increased. The construction of a shrine to the Goddess in the time of Kulothunga Chola III (1183) and another to Manickavasagar are also referred to in the inscriptions. These show that endowments were made for the worship of the latter shrine and for the recitation of the famous hymn '*Thiruvembavai*' composed by the Saint.

The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Veeratteswarar who is also populary known as Sri Krithivasar, the Lord who wore the skin of the elephant as a cloak is a Swayambu Lingam here. His divine consort is known as Sri Ilamkili Nayaki, Bala Gurambigai and Kripavathi. The stone inscriptions refer to the Lord as Sri Vazhugur Nayanar. The five faces of the Lord are represented by the five Theerthams here which go by the names of Satyojatham, Vamadevam, Tatpurusham, Agoram and Esanam. Of these the Esana Theertham which is also known as Sivapadhala

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1. Veeratteswaraswamy (Moolavar)
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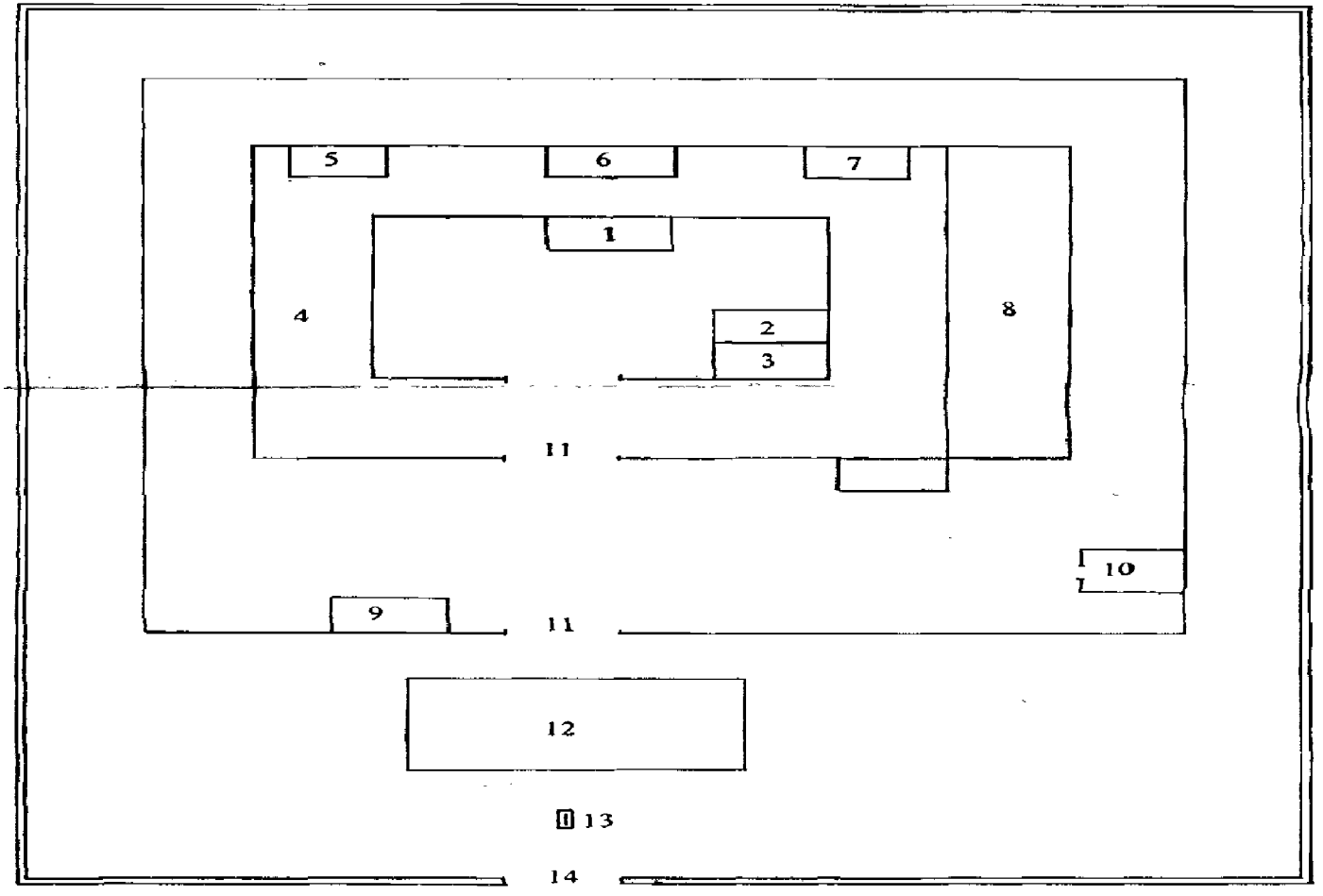
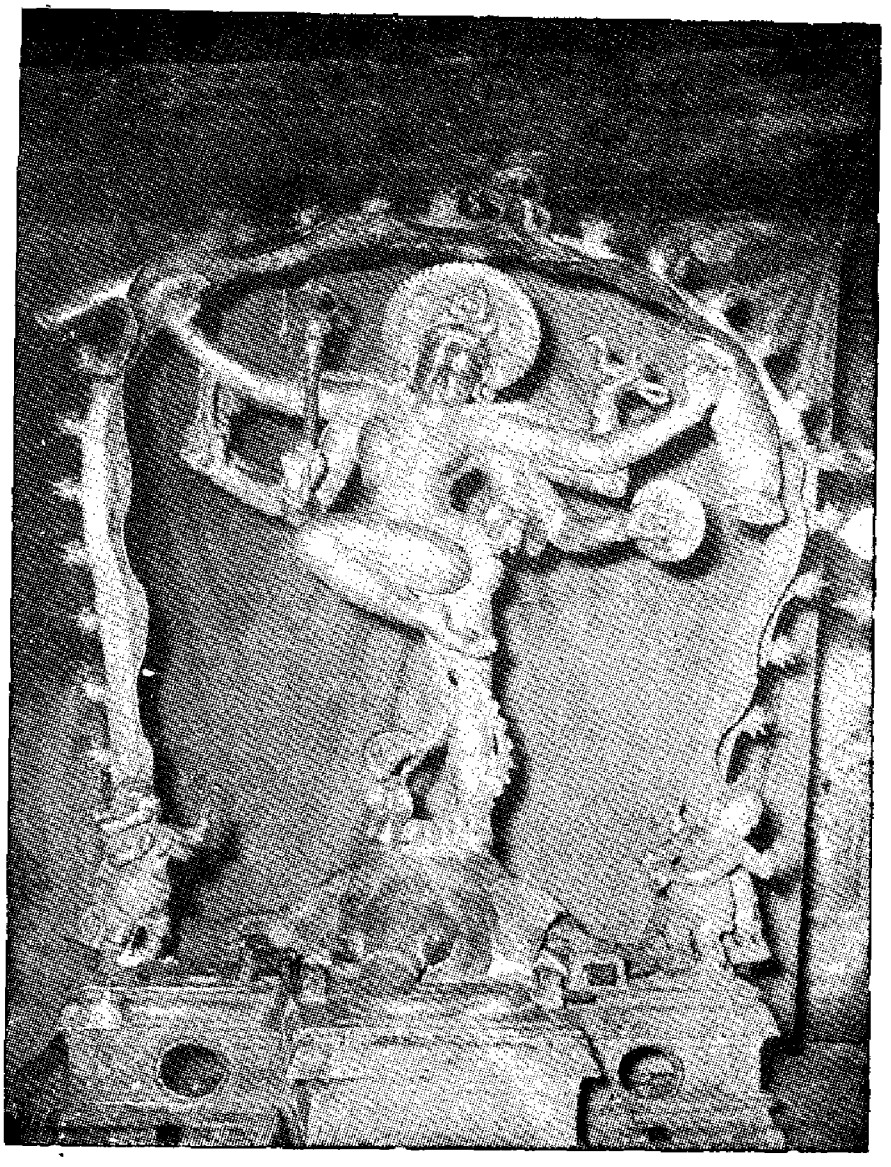
4. Sixty Three Nayanmars
5. Vinayagar
6. Murugar
7. Lakshmi
8. Amman Sannathi
9. Devasthanam Office
10. Hundred Pillared Mandapam
11. Entrance
12. Easana Theertham
13. Nandhi
14. Main Gopuram.

SRI VEERATTESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

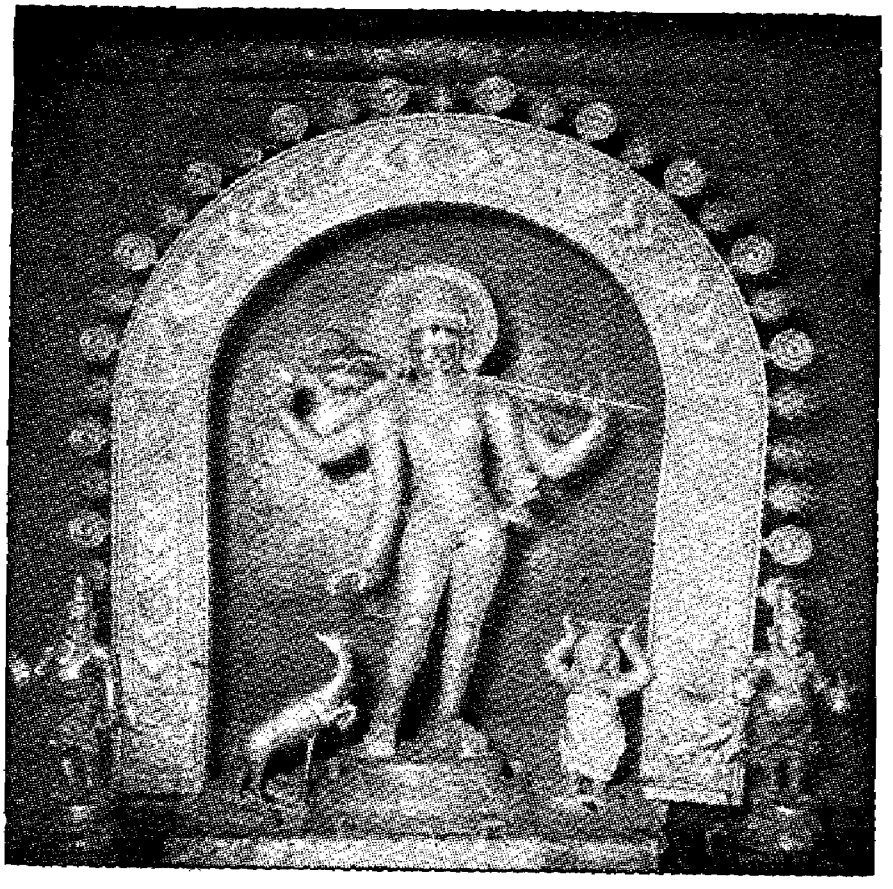
VALUVOOR

(Not to Scale)

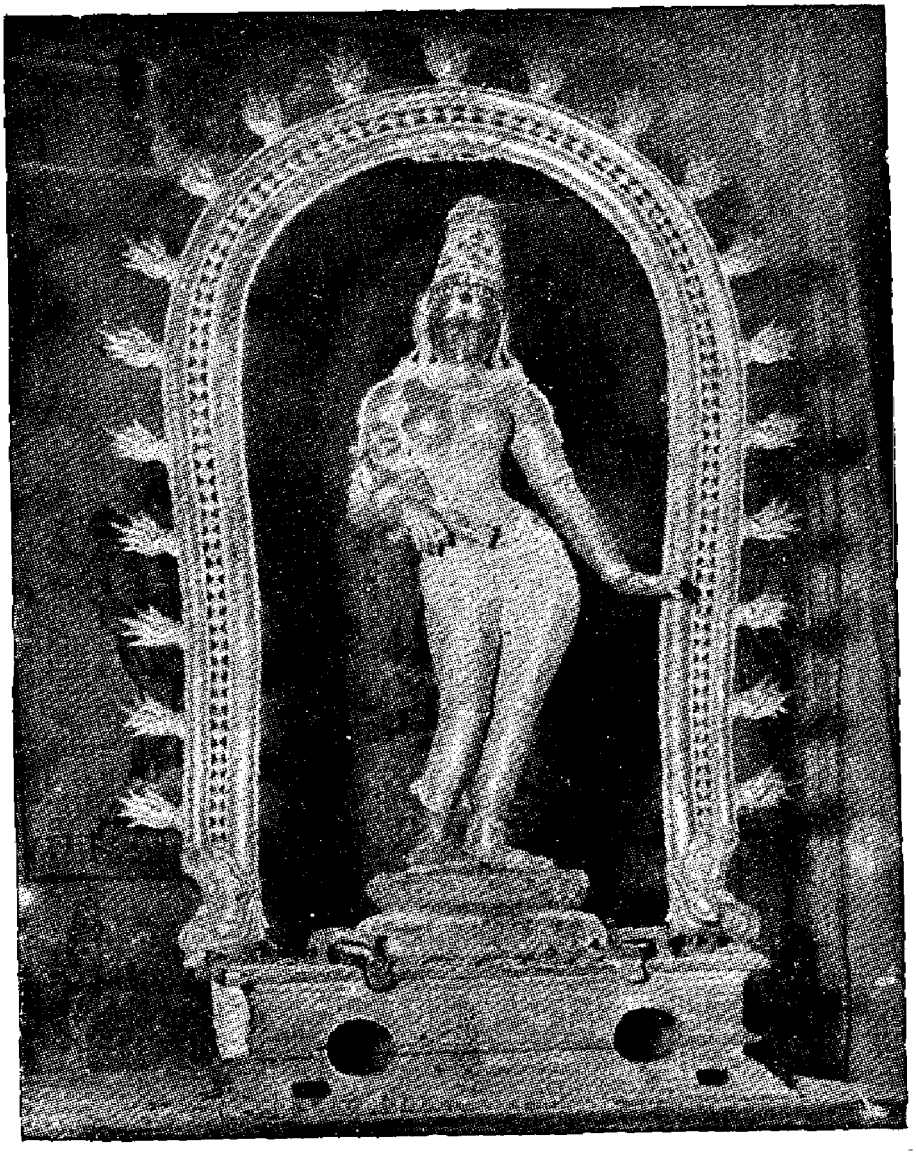




Sri Gajasamharar
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple
Vazhuvur.



Sri Bikshadanar
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple
Vazhuvur.



Umā with Skandha
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple
Vazhuvur.

Mohini
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple
Vazhuvur.

Gangai is the most famous one as it is believed that a bath in it on New Moon days helps to cure skin diseases. Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundarar have referred to this place in their hymns.

The temple with its 150 feet high beautiful Rajagopuram presents an imposing view. It covers an area of about 380 feet by 342 feet. There are four prakarams and two sancta apart from several mandapams.

The temple is believed to have been in existence for long having been built during the Chola period. In the recent past the temple gopuram and the walls are said to have been built by one Sri Alagu Perumal Pillai and the mandapams by Peralam Sri Chokku Mudaliar.

Among the Ashtaveerattams-places where Siva danced, Vazhuvur is one. The other places are Thiru Kandiyur, Thirukkovalur, Thiru Athigai, Thiru Paraiyalur, Thiruvirkudi, Thiru Kurukkai and Thirukkadavur. At Vazhuvur, the Lord is said to have killed the elephant demon Gajasuran, wore his skin as a cloak and danced over his head.

The dance hall is known as *Gnana Sabai*. The "Gnana Sabapathy Yantram" in bronze was installed by His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in 1941. As in Chidambaram Nataraja Sannidhi, the Yantram is installed here just behind Gajasamharamurthy idol and is known as "*Vazhuvur rahasyam*". The uthsava vigraham of Gajasamharamurthy depicts one of the *Urthuva Thandavam* (cosmic dance) posture the body taking half turn on the right side, the right leg stamping the head of the elephant demon and the left knee bent up for the benefit of devotees who worship the divine foot. There is an image of Goddess Parvathi with child Muruga near the image of Natarajar.

There are also several other fine bronze idols such as those of Bikshadanar, Alingana Murthy and Mohanambal. Inside the temple are the Saptha Lingams and the Navagrahas.

There is a separate sanctum for Saturn inside the temple. Sahasra Lingam is enshrined at the entrance to the first prakaram.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary priests. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver, worth about Rs. 12,000. made out of the temple funds. The landed properties of the temple comprise 305·55 acres of wet and 99·65 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 44,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance.

The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 100, while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 190 per annum.

Arudhra Darshan during Thiruvadhirai in Margazhi (December-January), the Gaja Samharam festival which takes place in the month of Masi (February-March) and the Pavai festival are the major ones celebrated here every year. Besides these, six Abishegams are performed for Sri Gaja Samhara-murthy in a year when one can see the exquisitely made figure. The Gaja Samharam festival attracts about 1,000 devotees from far and near.

There are two popular and interesting anecdotes connected with this place. One of them relates to Gajasuran, the elephant demon who did a severe penance and obtained a number of boons from Brahma. Brahma who blessed the demon took care to caution him not to challenge Lord Siva. The sages who were ill-treated by the demon sought refuge in Lord Siva and when the demon chased them, he came face to face with Siva who killed him and wore his skin as a cloak.

Another legend relates to some proud sages of Tharuka Vanam in the neighbourhood of Vazhuvur who were taught a lesson by Lord Siva who incanrated as a mendicant.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members

who are appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUKKADAIYUR

Sri Amirthaghateswaraswamy Temple

Thirukkadaiyur or Thirukkadavur, a small town about twenty kilometres from Mayuram with a population of 3,723 is a place of pilgrimage owing to the existence therein of the famous Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Amirthaghateswarar. The place which is on the Mayuram-Tranquebar branch of the Southern Railway is easliy accessible. Pleasantly situated in the heart of the town on an eleven acre plot of land, the temple with its lofty towers is perhaps one of the best in South India, both from the sculptural and artistic points of view. Beautiful plaster figures depicting some of the legends concerning Lord Siva are seen on the Rajagopuram. A visit to it was considered to be equivalent to the performance of hundred Horse sacrifice (*Aswamedha yaga*). Saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar had sung the praise of this deity.

The impressive and artistic image of Kalasamharamurthy in the act of killing Yama could be seen on the northern side of the Mahamandapam of the temple. On the sixth day of the Chithirai festival, Kalasamharamurthy is taken round the streets in a grand procession.

The divine consort is known here as Abirami Amman. There is a popular story relating to a learned priest of this shrine. Long ago on a New Moon day in the month of Thai, Saraboji, the King of Thanjavur visited the temple. To a query by the King, *Abirami Bhattar*, the devout priest of the temple and a great Devi Bhaktha who was lost in meditation replied that it was a Full Moon Day. As if to make the words of Her ardent devotee true, the Goddess created an illusion to the King that it was a Full Moon Day and saved Abirami Bhattar from the King's wrath. *Abirami Anthathi*, the ecstatic prayer of Abirami Bhattar is popular.

The following stanzas are from Abirami Anthathi :

தனந்தருங் கல்வி தருமொரு நாளுந் தளர்வறியா
மனந்தருந் தெய்வ வடிவுந்தரு நெஞ்சில் வஞ்சமில்லா
இனந்தரு நல்லன வெல்லாந் தருமன்ப ரென்பவர்க்கே
கனந்தரும் பூங்குழ லாளபி ராமி கடைக்கண்களே.

விழிக்கே அருளுண்டு அபிராம வல்லிக்கு வேதஞ்சொன்ன
வழிக்கே வழிபட நெஞ்சுண்டு எமக்கு;அவ் வழிகிடக்கப்
பழிக்கே சுழன்றுவெம் பாவங்க ளேசெய்து பாழ்நரகக்
குழிக்கே அழுந்துங் கயவர்தம் மோடென்ன கூட்டினியே ?

— அபிராமி யந்தாதி.

There are a few more interesting anecdotes concerning devotees of the Lord of which the one about *Kunguliakalaya Nayanar* is well known.

This is a place frequently visited by people who pray for longevity. *Shastiabthapoorthi* (Sixtieth birth day) and *Sathabishekam* (Eightieth birth day) functions are celebrated by people in the temple premises.

The following are the three Theerthams or sacred tanks in the temple : (1) *Amirtha Pushkarani* : It is within the temple precincts by the side of the eastern tower. On one bank of this tank there is Amirtha Siddhi Vinayagar temple. A dip in this tank on Fridays and Chithira Pournami day is considered very sacred. (2) *Kala Theertham* : This tank is believed to be the creation of Lord Yama. On the southern bank of it, there is a temple called Kaleswaralayam where Kalayar worshipped the Lord and obtained a boon that whoever took his bath at this tank would get God's blessings. (3) *Markandeya Theertham* : This is the tank where *Ganga Theertham* was obtained at the request of Markandeya. The water of this tank is not generally used for any purpose except the ablution of Sri Amirthalingeswarar and Sankabishegam. But devotees are permitted to take bath in this holy water once in a year viz., on Suklapaksham Aswani Nakshatram day in the Tamil month 'Panguni'.

Vilvam Tree and jasmine creeper are considered sacred in this shrine. Poojas are performed six times daily according to Kamika Agama Sastra. The Brahmothsavam in the month of Chithirai is the most important festival of this

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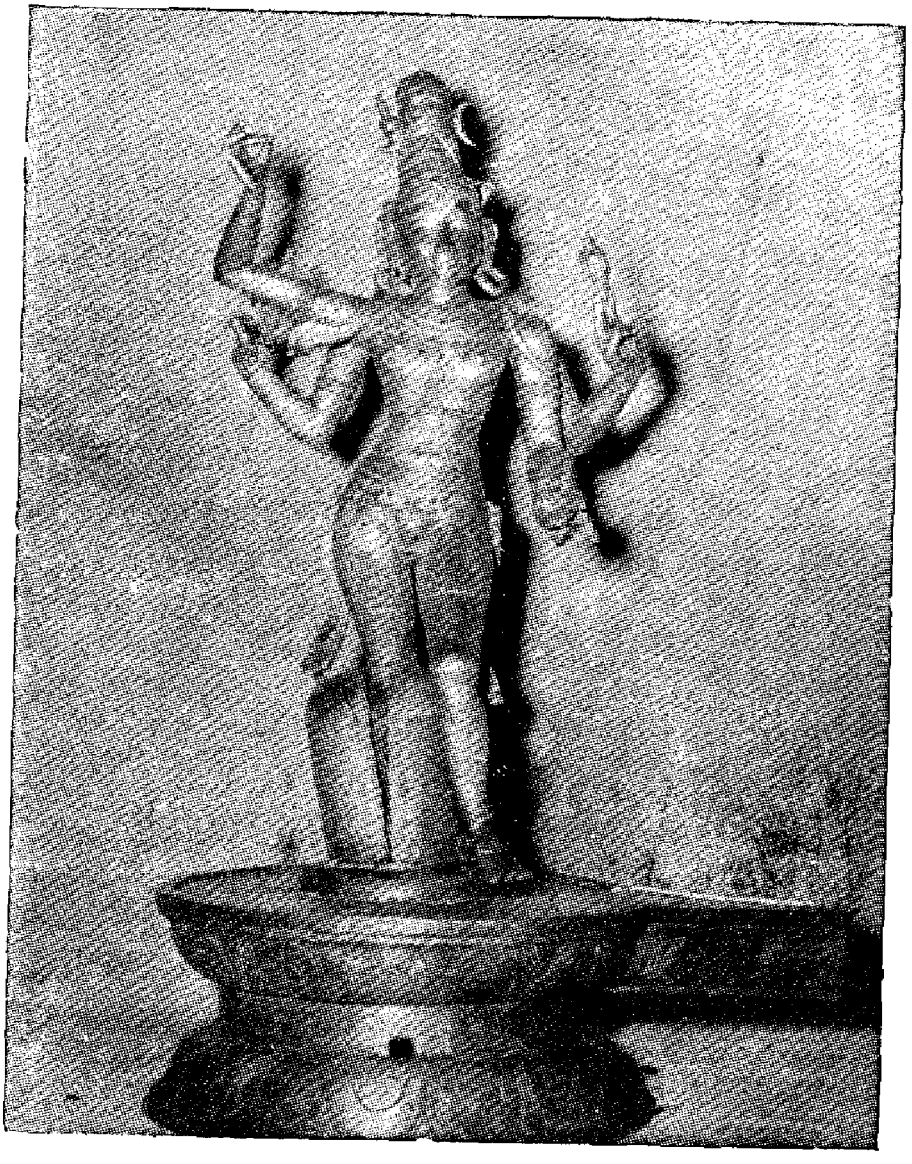
1. Amirthakadeswaraswamy
2. Nandhi
3. Kalasamharamurthy
4. Markandeswarar & Naganatheswarar
5. Subramaniar, Valli & Deivayanai
6. Mahalakshmi
7. Natarajar & Sivakami
8. Vilvaranyanathar
9. Punyavarthineeswarar
10. Bairavar
11. Chandikeswarar
12. Suriyan
13. Madapalli
14. Sthalaviruksham
15. Sapthamathars
16. Dharmarajar
17. Sixty Three Nayanmars
18. Kallavarana Pillaiyar
19. Somaskandhar
20. Palliarai
21. Dwajasthambam
22. Balipeedam
23. Alankara Mandapam
24. Devasthanam Office
25. 108 Pillared Mandapam
26. Cow Shed
27. Vinayagar
28. Kalaimagal
29. Abiramiamman (Uthsavar)
30. Abiramiamman (Moolavar)



Sri Kalarimurthy
Sri Amirthakadeswaraswamy Temple
Thirukkadaiyur.

temple. Navarathri and Adi Pooram are the other festivals. The *Sangu* (conch) Abishegam to the Lord on Mondays during the month of Karthigai is witnessed by thousands of devotees.

The temple has 1,622 acres of wet and 1,022 acres of dry lands besides six houses and shops. They fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,23,000. There are several costly vahanas here. The ancient jewels of the temple in gold, silver and diamonds are worth about Rs. 1,76,000.

According to a popular legend, Sage Mirugandu who was childless did severe penance invoking the blessings of Lord Siva for progeny. The Lord granted him the boon of begetting a son who would be a person of sharp intellect and sterling qualities but would survive only for sixteen years.

The boy Markandeya used to worship Lord Siva in this sacred place by performing Abishegam to the Lord with holy waters from the Ganga. The day of his attaining the sixteenth year approached. Markandeya remained unruffled and offered worship to the Lord as usual.

Legend has it that Yama came at the ordained hour. Markandeya clasped the Siva Lingam of Thirukkadaiyur. The noose which the God of Death threw to get hold of Markandeya, encircled the Sivalingam also. Siva got annoyed. Out of Amirtha Lingam arose the ferocious Kalasamharamurthy who killed Yama with his trident.

It is said that on seeing Yama, Markandeya clasped the Siva Linga so hard that the marks of his fingers and hand together with the mark of the rope of Yama which tied both Markandeya and the Linga are visible on the Lingam. These marks are peculiar features on this Lingam. Another peculiar feature about this temple is that there is no sanctum for Navagrahas as 'Kalasamharamurthy' is considered to be the supreme power of this temple.

The temple which is under the management of the Dharmapura Adheenam has been renovated from time to time,

INSCRIPTIONS

TOTAL NUMBER OF INSCRIPTIONS : I : 241-258 of 1925 (18 inscriptions) ; II : 15-52 of 1906 (38 inscriptions) ; 56 inscriptions have been copied from this temple.

The following kings are represented.

CHOLA KINGS :

Raja Raja I (985-1014 A. D.)
Rajendra I (1012-1044 A. D.)
Vira Rajendra (1063-1070 A. D.)
Kulothunga I (1070 A. D.)
Vikrama Chola (1118-1120 A. D.)
Raja Raja II (1146-1163 A. D.)
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A. D.)

PANDYA KINGS :

Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1270 A. D.)
Jatavarman Vira Pandya (1253-1276 A. D.)
Maravarman Kulasekhara (1268-1312 A. D.)

VIJAYANAGARA KINGS :

Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A. D.)
Vira Virupanna Udaiyar

The earliest king represented in the temple is Raja Raja I (985-1014 A. D.)

NAME OF THE VILLAGE : The name of the village is mentioned as Thirukkadavur, Padai Evia Kadavur and Ulpadai Evia Thirukkadavur. The village Kadavur is said to be in Ambaranadu, a sub-division of Uyyakkondan Valanadu. The name of divisions and sub-divisions are found frequently changed. In the reign of Rajendra Chola I, Thirukkadavur is said to be in Ambaranadu, a sub-division of Uyyakkondan Valanadu. Ambaranadu is said to be in Rajanarayana Valanadu in the reign of Kulothunga. In the reign of Raja Raja II, Thirukkadavur is said to be in Ambaranadu, a

sub-division of Uyyakkondan Valanadu. Ambaranadu is said to be in Rajanarayana Valanadu in the reign of Kulothunga. In the reign of Raja Raja II, Tirukkadavur is said to have been in Akkuranadu a sub-division of Jayamkonda Chola Valanadu.

NAME OF THE DEITY : The name of the deity is referred to as Thiruvirattanamudaiya Paramaswamy, Thirukkadavur Nayagar, Thiruvirattanathu Peruman Adigal and Thiruvirattanamudaiyar.

GIFTS : In a number of inscriptions the deity Kalakala Deva is referred to. In fact a number of inscriptions record gift of lands etc., to Kalakala Deva. The central shrine should have come into existence before the time of Raja Raja I. The mandapam, probably built in the same time carries a number of Chola and Pandya inscriptions. A number of other shrines are also referred to in the inscription of Kulothunga III; the shrine of Kalakala Deva, Koothadum Devar, Kulothunga Cholisvaram Udaiyar and Vikrama Cholisvaram Udaiyar; evidently the Kulothunga Cholisvaram Udaiyar was built in the reign of Kulothunga and Vikrama Cholisvaram Udaiyar after the name of Vikrama Chola. In the reign of Vijayanagara ruler Krishna Devaraya, a Brahmin named Abathsahaya who took part in the wars against Raichur and Vijayanagara repaired the temple.

IMAGES : An image of Rajarajeswara is said to have been installed by Araiyan Rajaraja Deva alias Vanadaraiyan in the reign of Kulothunga III. A certain mandapam called Thiruchitrambala Velaikkaran Thirumandapam in the temple is also referred to. In the reign of the same king a certain Vanavaraja of Korramangalam in Pambunikurram arranged for feeding daily ten Sivayogis, well versed in the Vedhas in the Markandeya Mutt for the health of the king. In the reign of Rajadhi Raja I (Thirty-sixth year) a certain Pichan Adithan alias Vijayarajendra Muvendavelan of Kovakkudi gifted some lands to feed seventeen persons in Rajadhi Raja salai. The Pandya ruler Maravarman Kulasekhara gifted thirty-one veli of land at the request of Kalingarayan and instituted a daily service called Kulasekhara Sandhi and a special worship on the day of Moola in the month of Ani in which he was born.

In the reign of Rajendra I, Raja Raja Muvendavelan arranged to pay paddy for the daily offering throughout the year and for the requirement of the eight days of the festival in the month of Chithirai in the temple of Kalakala Deva. Kulothunga III appointed Parasivan Ponnan alias Kalavinodha Nrittapperaiyan as dance master and musician in the temple at the request of Virantha Pallavarayan, a favourite poet of the king.

The inscriptions found in the temple give some interesting information about the social and economic conditions of the time. Two hundred and forty Vellalas are said to have submitted a memorial to the Chola King Rajadhi Raja II. In the reign of Raja Raja II, there was a draught in the village in the months of Avani and Purattasi and consequently the crops failed and the taxes due were remitted. In the fourteenth year of the same king some Mahesvaras of the temple of Kalakala Deva who, contrary to the tenants as the custodians of Siva temples and its observances intermingled freely with the Vaishnavas and wore or sold the lotuses grown for Kalakala Deva. Their property was confiscated to the temple.

In the reign of (probably) the Pandya ruler Kulasekhara, the residents of Erukkattucheri were made responsible for maintaining perpetual lamps and the residents of Kaviripoompattinam responsible for the safe custody of temple jewels and utensils.

The Vijayanagara Kings Virupanna Udaiyar and Krishna Devaraya made sarva-manya gifts to the temple by remitting various taxes to the temple.

THIRUVADUTHURAI

Sri Gomuktheeswarar Temple

Situated at a distance of about sixteen kilometres south-west of Mayuram, Thiruvaduthurai with a population of 5,027 is noted for its ancient Siva Temple of Sri Gomuktheeś-

warar or Masilamani Eswarar who is immortalised in the Thevaram by Saints Thirugnanasambandhar and Manickavasagar.

The place is also chiefly known for its reputed Saivite Mutt called '*Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam*' which has extensive landed properties covering over 30,000 acres in all the districts of the State except North Arcot, Salem and Dharmapuri. The date of founding this Mutt is, however, not known correctly. The Head of the Mutt appoints the managers and priests of the temples and other charitable institutions (*Kattalais*) under its control and also controls their funds. Some of these temples are renowned ones. The Mutt has a valuable collection of interesting and informative palm leaf manuscripts.

This temple is mentioned in the Puranas. The divine consort here is known as Oppilamulai Amman or Athulakujambal. It is said that the famous Siddha Saint Thirumoolar did penance here for long and composed *Thiru Manthiram*, the reputed work containing 3,000 stanzas. The most popular stanzas among them runs as follows:

சிவனெனொக் குந்தெய்வந் தேடினும் இல்லை
அவனெனொப் பார்இங்கு யாவரும் இல்லை
புவனங் கடந்தன்று பொன்னெளி மின்னுந்
தவனச் சடைமுடித் தாமரை யானே.

அன்பும் சிவமும் இரண்டென்பர் அறிவிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிகிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிந்தபின்
அன்பே சிவமாய் அமர்ந்திருந் தாரே.

—திருமந்திரம்

The Saint is worshipped here. Thiruvaduthurai is also called *Navakoti Siddhapuram* as Navakoti Siddhars performed penance here and attained the feet of Lord Siva. Legend has it that it was here that Parvathi who was cursed by Lord Siva became a cow, performed a severe penance and attained mukthi. Hence the name of the Lord is Sri Gomuktheeswarar meaning the Lord who gave mukthi to a cow.

The temple which covers an area of about 9·70 acres has a big Rajagopuram in the front. It is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Narasingampettai at a distance of about two kilometres. The temple is said to have been built some 1,300 years ago. Its precise origin is, however, unknown. Subsequently several additions and renovations were made by the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple. There are several stone inscriptions in the temple belonging to Chola and Pandya rulers. There are three prakarams, a gopuram, two sancta and two beautiful vimanams with plaster figures. A noteworthy feature of this temple is the gigantic Nandhi in front of the sanctum of the Lord. Arasamaram is the Sthala Viruksham here.

The presiding deity of this shrine Sri Gomuktheeswarar or Masilamani Eswarar is represented by a three feet high installed Lingam facing east. In a separate sanctum facing south stands His divine consort Sri Oppilamulai Amman whose image is a masterpiece of art. There are several sub-deities in the shrine, viz., Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Dakshina-murthy, Chandikeswarar etc., and a number of festival idols. It is said that Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundarar had visited this sthalam, offered worship and composed several sacred hymns in praise of the Lord. According to the *Sivasthala Manjari*, Saint Thirumoolar has composed Thirumanthiram here.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary priests. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold, silver and diamond worth about Rs. 41,000, all donated by the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 234·16 acres of wet and 224·57 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 57,000 by way of rent. This amount is utilised towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals as well as for annual repairs, upkeep and general maintenance. There is a silver rishabam and a silver peacock in the temple apart from several other vahanas, viz., lion, elephant, rishabam, horse parrot, swan etc., all made of wood.

Thiruvadhirai in Margazhi, Ani Thirumanjanam, Adi Pooram, Masi Sivarathri, Ayppasi Skandha Sashti, Sapthami in Adi and Rathasapthami during the Thai Brahmothsavam are the regular annual festivals celebrated by the temple. Of these, the Rathasapthami festival during the annual Brahmothsavam in the month of Thai which spreads over a period of ten days is the most important one, when about 3,000 to 5,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

The temple is administered by a Manager appointed by His Holiness, the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

KONERIRAJAPURAM

Sri Uma Maheswarar Temple

Konerirajapuram which is referred to as Thiru Nallam in Thevaram by Saint Appar is about ten kilometres south-east of Thiruvidaimarudhur. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 3,420. The presiding deity in the temple goes by the name of Uma Maheswarar and the Goddess as Mangala Nayaki. It is the temple that has made this place popular. It belongs to the early Chola period and was built by the great queen Sembian Madevi in memory of her husband Gandaraditya who died here. On the southern wall of the temple adjoining the sanctum are the statues of the king and the queen. There are a number of inscriptions on this wall.

There are two prakarams, two sancta, an Arthamandapam and a Mahamandapam. The Moolavar Sri Uma Maheswarar is a Pradhishta Lingam facing east. It is said that this ancient shrine had been visited by Saints Appar and Thirugnana-sambandhar who have composed several sacred Padhigams in praise of the Lord.

In the niches of the eastern side walls, there are two half pillars, small in size and two large pillars likewise. In the

Makara-thoranas over these, the figure of Gajalakshmi is seen. There are also attractive images of Sri Dakshinamurthy, Lingothbhavar, Brahma and others on the niches of the outer wall. On the southern wall of the Arthamandapam, the images of Agasthya, Vigneswara and Natarajar have been placed. On its northern side are found the statues of Bikshadanar, Durgai and Arthanari. The dome over the main sanctum which has been built later is in the form of an octagon. The Mukhamandapam in the front is about thirty-eight feet by thirty-three feet. From the inscriptions of Kulothunga III, it is learnt that its name was Pugazhabarana Mandapam. This temple is one of the standing monuments of the early Chola Kings and is still well maintained. The images of the royal couple, Sembian Madevi and Gandaraditya though about one thousand years old, still retain their beauty in stone and remain as a fitting tribute to the queen who not only built them but also made permanent arrangements for the upkeep as well as performance of the daily rituals by adequate grants. There are some beautiful bronze images in the temple, those of Natarajar, Kalyanasundarar etc. All these bronzes date back to the Tenth Century A.D. The several ancient inscriptions here will be of great interest to scholars and students of history alike.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary priests. The ancient jewels in the temple made of gold and silver are worth about Rs. 30,000. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 32·77 acres of wet and 7·62 acres of dry lands and a few vacant plots which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 6,000 by way of rent. There is a splendid collection of about twenty one vahanas which are preserved with great care.

Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi, Adi Pooram, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Deepam, Thiruvadhirai and Masi Sivarathri are the major annual festivals celebrated. Of these, the Vaikasi Brahmothsavam is the most important one, when about 500 devotees from the neighbouring villages congregate.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THIRUVALAPPUTHUR

Sri Rathnapureeswarar Temple

Situated on the southern bank of the Coleroon, Thiruvalapputhur is noted for its ancient Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Rathnapureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is known as Sri *Vandar Poonkuzhali* or *Vandamar Poonkuzhal Nayaki*. The place is at a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Mayuram on the Mayuram-Pandanallur road. Buses are plying frequently from Kumbakonam, Mayuram and Vaitheeswarankoil to this place. This sacred Sivasthalam is one of the 274 sacred Saivite centres which have been immortalised in the verses of the famous Thevaram. The population of the place according to the 1961 Census is 3,377.

The temple which is in the heart of the village faces east. It occupies an area of about 1·27 acres. There are three prakarams and two sancta apart from a three-tiered inner gopuram and two small vimanams with plaster figures on them. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the beautiful image of Nandhi in the front with the head slightly tilted towards south. The enchanting idol of the Goddess Vandamar Poonkuzhal Nayaki is of good workmanship. One can worship in the temple Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Dakshinamurthy, Bikshadanar, Suryan, Chandran, Chandikeswarar and Bairavar. There are separate sancta for Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Saneeswarar, Gajalakshmi and Saraswathi. There is a separate shrine here for Durgai whose beautiful image is a masterpiece of sculpture. There are also several bronze images which are taken in procession during festivals. The images of Bikshadanar and Vasuki deserve special mention. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the absence of the Navagrahas.

Poojas are performed four times a day by hereditary priests according to Siva Agamam. The temple possesses considerable antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about

Rs. 1,000. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 135·62 acres of wet and 127·24 acres of dry lands and also two houses. These fetch an annual income of about Rs. 42,000 by way of rent. This income is utilised for the maintenance of the temple. The temple is maintaining a choultry for accommodating pilgrims. The annual hundi collections come to about Rs. 100 while the income through Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 200 per annum. There are as many as ten vahanas here, all made of wood.

Vaikasi Visakham, Karthigai Deepam, Panguni Uthiram, Navarathri, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Skandha Sashti, Sivarathri and Thiruvadhirai are the regular annual festivals celebrated, of which the Vaikasi Visakham is the most important one. Thousands of devotees gather in the village to witness this festival and worship Sri Rathnapureeswarar and Vandar Poonkuzhal Nayaki.

Legend has it that since the Lord of this shrine had once hidden the mighty sword of Arjuna, the great Pandava in an ant-hill nearby to test his devotion, the place got the name *'Thiru Vaal Oli Puthur'* which later became Thiruvalapputhur. The Lord is also said to have quenched His thirst by creating a Theertham, which is now particularly known as Ayyan Theertham or Thanda Theertham. There are also two other holy Theerthams here, viz., Chakkara Theertham and Brahma Theertham. The sacred 'Vagai' Tree is the Sthala Viruksham of the temple. As the sacred *'Vanmeekam'*, i.e., ant-hill where the Lord is said to have hidden the sword of Arjuna is to be found here, it came to be called "Vanmeeka Puram". Goddess Durgai here is noted for Her miraculous powers. Hence it is known as Durga Puram also. Sri Thirumal is supposed to have installed a precious stone (i.e.,) "Rathnam" here and worshipped it wherefore the Lord came to be known as Manickavannar or Manickalingar and the sthalam as Aradha Puram. Lord Brahma, Indra, Sage Durvasar, Durga Devi and many kings are believed to have worshipped the Lord and attained eternal bliss. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and composed several verses in praise of the Lord.

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20. Vandamar Poonguzhal Nayagi
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23. Devasthanam Office
24. Vahana Mandapam

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KORUKKAI

Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple

At a distance of about eight kilometres north-west of Mayuram is the village of Korukkai. The ancient Siva temple here is dedicated to Sri Veeratteswarar or Yogeeswarar.

The village where this reputed shrine stands is five kilometres north-west of Nidur railway station which is on the Madras-Trichy main line. The sacred tank popularly called Soola Theertham in front of the temple is considered as holy as the Ganges. The population of the village is 1,710.

The ancient temple covers an area of 2·5 acres. It was renovated by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam and a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1959. There are several stone inscriptions here giving valuable information about the temple. The temple has a beautiful tower in the front, two prakarams, two sancta and two beautiful vimanams, one for Swamy and one for Ambal with stucco figures on them. There is a separate shrine for Sri Durgaparameswari Amman. The Moolavar, Sri Veeratteswarar is a Swayambu Lingam. A novel feature of this Lingam is that it has a beautiful lotus like structure on the top known as the '*Vishnu Peetam*' Saint Appar had worshipped the Lord here and composed several sacred Padhigams in His praise, of which the undermentioned stanza is an impressive one.

அணங்குமை பாக மாக அடக்கிய ஆதி மூர்த்தி
வணங்குவார் இடர்கள் தீர்க்கும் மருந்துநல் அருந்தவத்த
கணம்புல்லர்க் கருள்கள் செய்து காதலாம் அடியார்க் கென்றும்
குணங்களைக் கொடுப்பர் போலுங் குறுக்கைவீ ரட்ட னீரே

—திருநாவுக்கரசு நாயனார்

Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary Brahmin priests according to the principles of the Agama Sastras. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 23,000, of which the silver Nagabaranam of the Swamy and the Kavacham of the Ambal deserve special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 264 acres of wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 24,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for the daily poojas and periodical festivals as well as for general maintenance. The temple owns a rishabam, a peacock, a swan, a bandicoot and a parrot vahanam all made of wood.

The place is held very sacred since according to a popular belief it was here that the Lord in Yogic posture opened His third eye on the forehead and burnt Kama or Cupid to ashes.

Navarathri, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Sivarathri and Masi Magham are the regular annual festivals celebrated by the temple. The Manmatha festival commemorating the mythological incident is celebrated in a grand manner during the Masi Uthsavam. The festival celebrated with great eclat attracts a large number of devotees from far and near.

Legend has it that being unaware of the divinity that characterised the waters of the Soola Theertham, Saint Dheergabahu Munivar stretched out his hands as usual towards the Heavens to receive the Holy Ganges water. But at once he was shocked to see his long hands grow short. His pathetic appeal to Lord Vinayaga was of no avail. In a state of despair, he began to knock his head against a stone but there shot out of the stone a hand to protect his head and bless him. Dheergabahu who was so blessed came to be known as Kurungai (*Kurumkai* - short hand) Munivar. The village's name is Kurungai which later on got corrupted into *Kurukkai* or *Korukkai*. The glory of this sacred sthalam is supposed to have been narrated to the Devas by the reputed Sage Vyasar.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

CHOLAS :

Kulothunga I (1070 A. D.)
Vikrama I (1118-1120 A. D.)
Raja Raja II (1146-1163 A. D.)
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A. D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A. D.)

VIJAYANAGAR :

Bukka (1344-1377 A. D.)

Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A. D.)

VILLAGE: The village is referred to as Kurukkai alias Vikrama Chola Chaturvedimangalam in Korrukkainadu, a sub-division of Virudharaja-bhajankara Valanadu.

DEITY: The main deity is referred to as Thiruvirattanam Udaiyar.

GIFTS: The inscriptions are found on the mandapam and Chandeswara shrines. Most of the inscriptions refer to gifts of lands to the temple. However, a few are of interest. An inscription in the twenty-ninth year of Kulothunga III records the gift of paddy for meeting the expenses of maintaining the servants of *Thiruppalliyarai*, the construction of a guhai called Thirunavukkarasu Thirukkugai for feeding the destitute apurvins who visited it and the Mahesvaras who attended the festival of *Thiru Vaikasi Thirunal*. It also refers to the recitation of *Thiruth Thandagam* in the temple. In the nineteenth regnal year of Raja Raja II, the temple obtained a number of temple servants by purchase and free gift. A certain Thirugnanasambandhar Monastery (guhai) is referred to in the reign of Kulothunga III. Another inscription of the same king (Kulothunga III) records a gift of money by a lady to some other temple. The lady named Araiyan

Umaiyalvi belonging to Periya Ahapparivarman gifted for offerings to the temple of Thiru Chamundisvaramudaiyar and to the images of Thiruppalliyarai Nachiyar and Atkondanayaka Deva set up by her in the temple at Panaiyur in Kurrukkainadu.

KURUMANAKKUDI

H/O KONDATHUR

Sri Kannayiramudaiyar Temple

The small hamlet known as Kurumanakkudi is noted for its hoary Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Kannayiramudaiyar, a Swayambu Lingam. The village is about three kilometres away from Vaitheeswarankoil and is an equally important Sivasthalam though not as popular as the latter. This holy place is also known as Thirukannarkoil. Saints Appar, Thirugnana-sambandhar, Sekkizhar and Ramalinga Swamigal have all sung in praise of the Lord. The population of Kondathur, the main village is 1,627 according to 1961 Census.

The gopurams are attractive. The temple is so designed that *Sthooba Darshan* and Swami Darshan can be had simultaneously, which is considered to be a rare feat of engineering. There are two prakarams and two sancta, apart from an Arthamandapam and a Mahamandapam. The holy tank opposite to the shrine is called Indra Theertham. The Manikarnika rivulet runs close by. The sacred Konrai Tree is the Sthala Viruksham. There is a choultry near the temple.

The Goddess is known as Muruguvalar Kodhai Nayaki, also called Suguntha Kunthalambigai. The beautiful image of the devoted Mandavya Maharishi is found enshrined at the feet of the Goddess. The images of Sri Vinayagar are installed in various forms here, viz., Siddhi Vinayagar, Narthana Ganapathi, Kudavarai Vinayagar and Kalli Ganapathi. There

are separate shrines here for Subramaniar with Valli and Deivayanai, Baladhandayuthapany, Dakshinamurthy, Bairavar, Nalvar, Goddess Mahalakshmi, Durgai, Brahma, Chandikeswarar, the Sun and the Moon. There is no separate shrine for Navagrahas, though there is a separate sanctum for Saturn alone. Among the festival idols, mention may be made of those of Bhoga Sundarambal and Appar which were found recently during excavation.

Poojas are performed five times daily by non-hereditary priests. There is a *Gosala* attached to the temple and milk Abhishegams are made to the Lord four times a day. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 2,000. The silver kavachams for the Swamy, Ambal, Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Natarajar, the Nagabaranam of the Lord and the golden Thirumangalyam of the Ambal are important among them. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 38·97 acres of wet and 32·52 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 15,000 by way of rent. This sum is spent for its maintenance. The hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 150 per annum. There is a good collection of vahanas. These are preserved with great care. During the month of Karthigai, the deities are taken out in a procession to the accompaniment of Nadhaswaram and *Vedha Parayanam*.

There is a legend to the effect that Indra offered worship to Lord Siva here to obtain redemption from Sage Gauthama's curse for his misbehaviour with Ahalya. The Lord is believed to have answered Indra's prayers, but ordained that he would bear the scars of his misconduct in the form of thousand eyes. As Indra was not convinced, the Lord Himself appeared before him with as many eyes as he was ordained to have. The Lord, therefore, came to be known here as *Kannayireswarar*, Thirukkannar and Sahasra Nethareswarar, all names denoting the one with thousand eyes. The Swayambu Lingam also has 1,000 marks of eyes on it in commemoration of this incident. It is said that unmarried girls offering worship at this shrine are blessed with ideal partners in life.

A Board of Trustees consisting of two members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THIRUNINRIYUR

H/O NATHAM (P)

Sri Lakshmipureeswaraswamy Temple

Situated on the northern bank of the river Cauvery, Thiruninriyur is one of the sixty-three reputed Sivasthalams of the ancient Chola Nad. The place has also been known as Thiruninravur as if to point out that Goddess Lakshmi is always present here. The population of the main village Natham according to 1961 Census is 1,533.

The place is about eight kilometres from Mayuram on the road to Sirkali. It is connected by both bus and train, the nearest railway station being Ananda Thandavapuram at a distance of about six kilometres.

The temple which covers an area of about an acre has a forty-five feet high three tiered gopuram in the front and presents an impressive view. The present structure was built about seventy years ago by the Nagarathar community of Nattukottai. Renovations were effected six years ago by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam and a Kumbabishegam was performed. There are two prakarams and four sancta. There are Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam as well. The Moolavar, Sri Lakshmipureeswarar is facing east. His divine consort known as Ulaganayagi is enshrined in a separate sanctum. Vinayagar, Subramaniar, and Chandikeswarar are the other deities in this temple.

Poojas are performed twice daily by non-hereditary priests according to the principles of the Siva Agamam. The

landed properties of the temple comprise about 6·17 acres of wet and eight acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,000. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas of the temple and for its upkeep and general maintenance.

Legend has it that the Goddess Lakshmi worshipped the Lord here, performed a severe penance and got the boon of permanent residence on the chest of Lord Vishnu. The place is, therefore, known also as Lakshmipuram and the presiding deity as Lakshmipureeswarar. There is also another story in vogue according to which a Chola King who came to the temple for worship with a burning wick in hand wanted to stay till the light was extinguished. But to his surprise, the effulgence of the light completely dazzled his eyes. And so the name Thiruninravoor was given to the place (*Thiri* - wick). It is said that the great sages Agasthya and Parasuramar, Devendra and his divine white elephant Iyravatha, the sacred cow Kamadhenu and others have worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. Saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar have also visited this shrine, worshipped the Lord and composed several sacred Padhigams in His praise in Thevaram.

The affairs of the temple are managed by a Superintendent appointed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam, who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

ANANDA THANDAVAPURAM

Sri Panchanadiswarar Temple

The ancient and famous Siva temple at Ananda Thandavapuram about seven kilometres from Mayuram is noted for its unique image of Lord Natarajar. "*Ananda Thandavam*" is a pose in which the foot of the raised left leg of the Lord is kept in line with the face and the right foot. Since Natarajar

here exhibits this pose, the place came to be known as Ananda Thandavapuram. The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Panchanadiswarar is a Swayambu Lingam. The population according to 1961 Census is 2,658.

The temple which covers an area of about 7·57 acres has a hundred feet high gopuram. It is said that it was built during the period of the Chola Rulers. Subsequently in 1938, it was renovated and a Kumbabishegam performed. The village is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train. There are four prakarams and two sancta. From the Thevaram sung by Appar, it is learnt that this place was once known as "Kanjanur". The village became famous when poet Gopala Krishna Bharathi who composed and sang "*Nandan Charitra Keerthanaigal*" lived there.

Poojas are performed thrice daily by hereditary priests who are in the enjoyment of service inam lands. The temple owns some antique jewellery in gold and silver. The landed properties of the temple comprise about six acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 300 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas of the temple and for its upkeep and general maintenance.

Lord Siva is also known as Sri Jatanathar here. A famous devotee by name *Manakkanjara Nayanar* lived in this place. The marriage of his only daughter Punnyavathy with Kalikkamar, another Nayanar, was arranged. The Lord in order to test the devotees appeared in the form of a mendicant with his locks of hair untied. He asked for the braided hair of the bride to tie his locks in-tact. This was a strange request; for how could the hair be removed from the head of a girl to be married the next day? But the father did remove the hair of the girl and offered it gladly to the guest. The Lord tied His locks of hair and disappeared. He also played a trick on the bridegroom who was His devotee by inducing him to go in search of another girl, as the girl he had been offered had a bald head. But Kalikkamar decided to marry the girl originally proposed. Immediately he had "Dharshan" of the Lord. The girl's hair was restored in full. There is a fine

bronze image of Sri Jatanathar here with an excellent arrangement of His "*Jata Makuda*". There are also several other festival idols made of panchalogam.

The Sthala Puranam of the temple narrates the reason for the Lord's "Ananda Thandavam" here. It is said that a sage by name Anandar who was an ardent devotee of Lord Natarajar was proceeding to nearby Chidambaram for worship on the Arudhra Darshan day. But he was held up at this village due to heavy rains. He naturally felt frustrated and tried to kill himself. Moved by his devotion, the Lord appeared before him and showed His unique "Ananda Thandavam".

An ancient pea-cock and a rishaba vahanam made of wood are the only vahanams in the temple. Thai Poosam is the most important annual festival celebrated by the temple which attracts devotees from the neighbouring villages and taluks.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

NIDUR

Sri Somanathaswamy, Sri Viswanathaswamy and Sri Lakshminarayana Perumal Temple

Nidur is acclaimed as one of the important Saivite centres in Thanjavur district. It is situated at a distance of five kilometres from Mayuram and has a railway station. It is also served by Town buses plying from Mayuram. The population of Nidur according to 1961 Census is 3,112.

In the Sthala Puranam of this temple, it has been mentioned that the very name *Nidur* indicates that it is a

place with paddy fields and gardens. The richness of the soil and the abundance of irrigation facilities of this place have been mentioned in Thevaram and Peria Puranam.

Saint Sundaramurthy Swamigal had worshipped the deities of this place and sung in their praise. This is also said to be the birth place of *Munaiaduvar Nayanar*, one of the sixty-three Nayanmars.

The Sthala Viruksham of this temple is Magizha Tree (*Miumsops Ilangi*). The place is also known as Vahularanyam, Magizharanyam and Maghizhavanam consistent with the exuberant growth of Magizha Trees in the past.

There are two Siva temples and a Vishnu temple in this place. Saint Sundarar has praised Somanathaswamy as the Lord of Music and Dance and hence the deity is also known as *Gananirtha Sankarar*. The divine consort of Lord Somanathaswamy is known as Vedhanayaki. Two other names of the Goddess - Veyuru Tholi Amman and Adhikanthi Amman are mentioned in the Thevaram.

The name of the deity in the second Siva temple is Sri Viswanathaswamy whose divine consort is known as Sri Visalakshi Amman. The presiding deity in the Vaishnavite temple is known as Sri Lakshminarayana Perumal.

The exact ages of the Saivite temples are not known, but they are said to have been in existence from the Chola period. The Vaishnavite temple is believed to have been constructed about two hundred years ago, viz., 1761 A. D. There are also some inscriptions on the southern wall of the Somanathaswamy prakaram.

There are two sancta, two prakarams and two Maha-mandapams in Sri Somanathaswamy Temple. There is a Rajagopuram at the entrance to the Swamy temple. Within the inner prakaram of the Swamy temple are the shrines of Natarajar, Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Lakshmi. All these three temples occupy roughly about thirty cents of land.

Sri Somanathaswamy is said to be a Swayambu Lingam while Sri Viswanathaswamy is a Pradhishta Lingam. In the Perumal temple besides the Moolavar, there are also Uthsava deities of Sri Ramar, Lakshmanar, Sita and Hanuman.

It is believed that there are nine holy Theerthams. Ananda Theertham, Munivarar Theertham, Sengazhu Nirodai, Paruthikandam, Soorya Theertham, Indra Theertham, Varuna Theertham, and Badrakali Theertham.

Three poojas are performed in the two Saivite temples while there is only one pooja in the Perumal Temple. It is said that the priests of the temples own hereditary right in the matter of the performance of poojas. They are paid from the temple funds.

There are 16·02 acres of dry lands and 1·31 acres of wet lands for Sri Somanathaswamy Temple while there is only one acre of wet land for both Viswanathaswamy Temple and Lakshminarayana Perumal Temple. The lands have been leased out. The annual income from the lands for Sri Somanathaswamy Temple is estimated at Rs. 1,000, while the income for the other two temples is estimated at Rs. 1,000. The income derived is utilised for the upkeep and maintenance of the temples.

There are six vahanas made of wood viz., two rishabams, goat, swan, sooran and pea-cock for Sri Somanathaswamy, but there is no car or palanquin. In respect of the other two temples, there are neither vahanams nor cars.

The administration of the temples is vested with the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUVILANDUR

Sri Parimala Ranganathaswamy Temple

About two kilometres to the north of Mayuram is Thiruvilandur where there is a famous Vaishnavite shrine

dedicated to Lord Parimala Ranganathar. This is one of the Pancha Rangams; the others are Srirangapatnam, Srirangam, Koiladi and Kumbakonam. The population of the village according to 1961 Census is 2,654.

The present temple is said to have been built in the Chola days. It has been renovated from time to time. In the recent past, Kumbabishegam of the temple was performed in February 1968. The idol of the Lord is of good workmanship. It is made of a single green stone measuring 12 feet by 5·5 feet. The five-headed serpent made of stone has been installed separately over the deity's head. Brahma's image is near the wall on line with the naval of the Lord. Santhana-Gopalakrishnan is at the Lord's feet. Sri Devi and Bhu Devi are seen on the floor on either side of the idol.

The brass plates that adorn the walls of the sannadhi bear exquisite workmanship. One can worship in the temple the Moola Vigrahams of Viswaksena, Yoga Narasimhar and Chandrar. There are stone as well as bronze images of Sri Ramar, Lakshmanar, Sita and Hanuman.

Dwajasthamba Mandapam and Garuda Mandapam have been recently constructed. The artistic work on the pillars of these mandapams deserves mention. The Dasavatharams of Lord Vishnu have been beautifully depicted on the pillars of Garuda Mandapam.

The temple has been praised by Sri Thirumangai Alwar in ten verses. The small but beautiful image of Santhana Gopala Krishnan is said to bless issueless couples with children. There are a few sub-temples attached to this main temple.

Poojas are performed six times daily according to Pancharathra Agamam. The temple possesses considerable antique jewellery and landed property. Apart from the silver ratham, there are silver plated and wooden mounts.

In the Tamil month of Ayppasi the temple wears a festive look. On all the days during that month, the deity is taken

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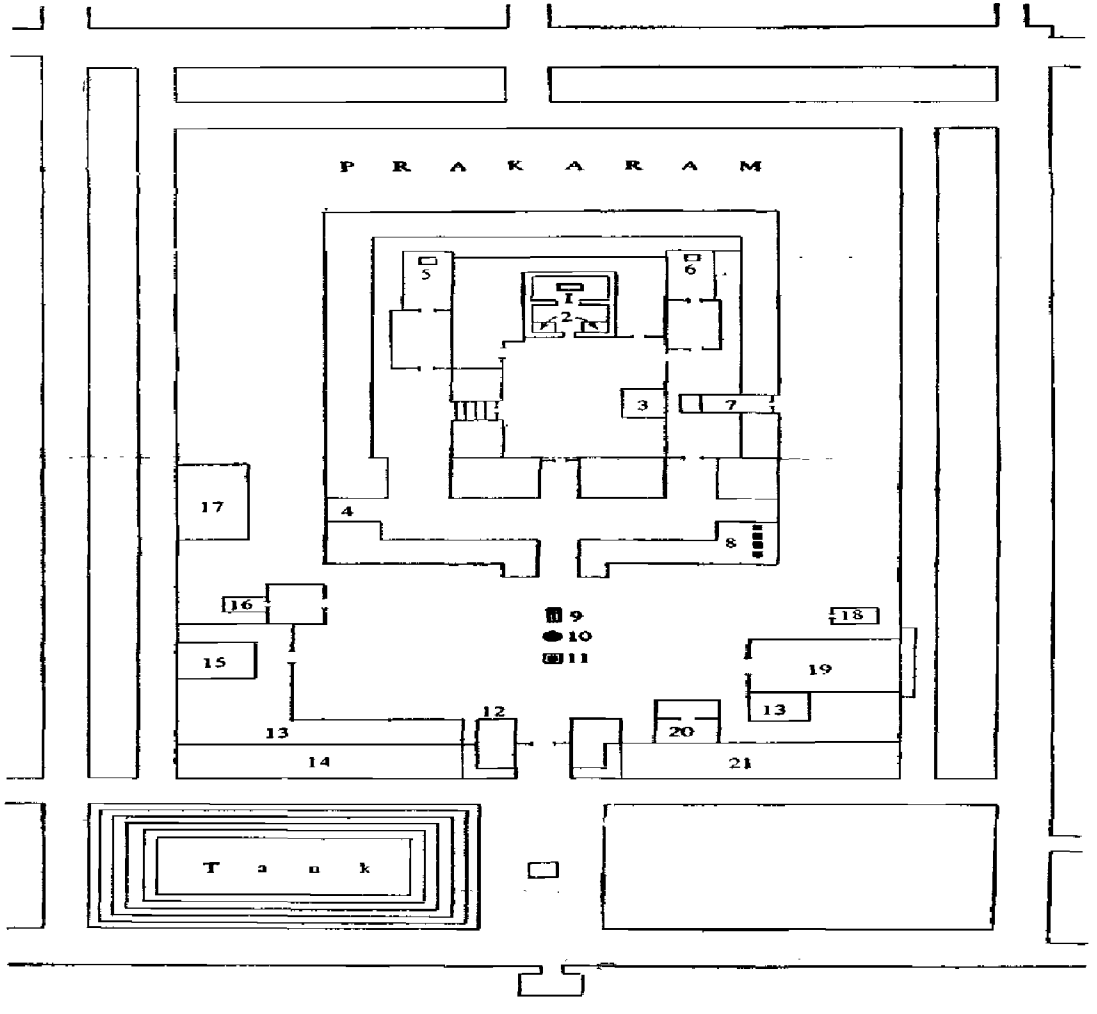
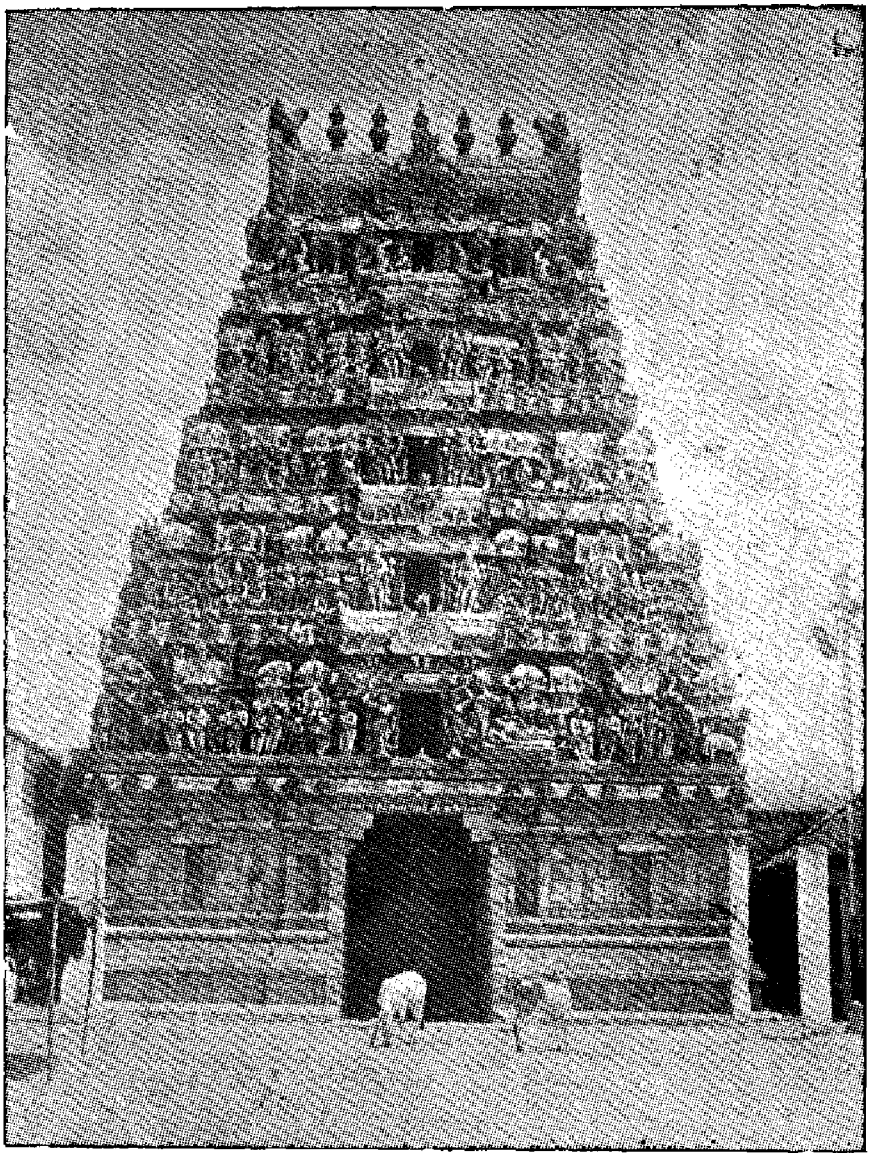
SRI PARIMALA RANGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

THIRUVILANDUR

(Not to Scale)





Sri Parimala Ranganathaswamy Temple Rajagopuram
Thiruvilandur.

to the banks of the river Cauvery. Thousands of devotees gather in the village to witness the festival and worship Sri Parimala Ranganathar and Goddess Parimala Ranganayaki.

This sacred place is mentioned in the scriptures. It is said that Brahma, Chandra, Yama, Ambareesha and Viswamitra had offered worship here. Brahma learnt the process of creation from Lord Ranganathar. But the two demons-Madhu and Kaitabha-stole the Vedhas and disappeared into the sea. The Lord retrieved the Vedhas by taking the form of a giant fish (*Matsya Avathara*). In response to the severe penance performed by the Vedhas, the Lord restored their original fragrance and the place became "*Sugantharanyam*". The Lord who took His abode here got the name Parimala Ranganathar. The Goddess was named Parimala Ranganayaki.

A bath in the river Cauvery here is said to be as sacred as that in the Ganga. Pleased with the penance offered by the river Cauvery, Lord Ranganathar granted the boon that Cauvery would be superior to Ganga. Thiruvilandur is as famous as Srirangam and Kumbakonam. During the Thula festival, the Ganga is believed to flow into the Cauvery to get herself purified.

According to another legend, Chandra or the Moon who was once suffering from consumption and losing his form gradually was cured of his disease after he took bath in the Cauvery and offered worship to Lord Ranganathar.

INSCRIPTIONS

All inscriptions were copied from this temple. One is dated in the seventeenth year of a certain Tribhuvana Chakravarti Konerinmaikondan. The identity of this king is not known. The other record is dated in Saka 1419.

VILLAGE: The village is referred to as Thiruvindalur in Thiruvindalur Nadu, a sub-division of Vadakarai Rajadhiraja Valanadu.

DEITY: The main deity is referred to as Maruvinoya Maindar.

GIFTS: The epigraph of Konerinmaikondan registers a royal gift of four veli of land to the temple of Ponmeintha Perumal and twenty-seven veli of land to fifty-four Batta's who were settled in Ponmeintha Pandya Chaturvedimangalam founded in the name of the king round the temple of Azhaga Perumal at Kachamangalam. The other inscription mentions the coin Chakra Kuligai.

KARUNKUYIL NATHANPETTAI

H/O MANAKUDI

Sri Sakthipureeswaraswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of about three kilometres east of Mayuram town, Karunkuyilnathanpettai in Manakudi village is noted for its ancient and reputed Siva temple dedicated to Sri Sakthipureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is known as Sri Anandavalli.

The temple which covers an area of about fifty cents has a single prakaram, two sancta and two vimanams. The origin of this temple is unknown and it is said that renovations were made recently by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam. The Moolavar is Sri Sakthipureeswarar facing east. In a separate sanctum stands His divine consort Sri Anandavalli facing south. Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Mariamman etc., are the sub-deities here.

Poojas are performed twice daily by non-hereditary priests. The temple owns both wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 7,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The festival in the month of Karthigai is celebrated with great eclat when the devotees from the neighbouring villages congregate.

The temple is managed by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

Legend has it that Indra who flew away from Daksha Yaga in the guise of a black cuckoo (*Karum Kuyil* in Tamil) plunged into the temple tank here and was absolved of all his sins. He later offered worship in this temple. This explains the name of this place. Even to-day hundreds of devotees bathe in this tank continuously for periods extending to forty-five days hoping to get cured of all bodily ailments. It is said that worship has also been offered by one of the Sapthakannigas whose beautiful statue may be seen inside the temple.

VILANAGAR

H/O ARUPATHI

Sri Thurai Kattum Vallalar Temple

Situated on the southern bank of the river Cauvery, Vilanagar has an ancient Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Vallalarswamy who is popularly called "Thurai Kattum Vallalar". Some scholars consider that the "*vizhal*" a kind of grass is sacred to the temple and hence the place came to be known as Vilanagar. This temple richly endowed by Uthama Surabi, wife of Uthama Naik is situated at a distance of about five kilometres from Mayuram on the Mayuram-Tranquebar road. It has been glorified by Saint Sambandhar. The population of Arupathi which is the main village is 3,104.

The temple facing east has a big five tiered gopuram. The shrine covers an area of about 2·30 acres. It is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Sembanarkoil at a distance of about three kilometres. There are two sancta with Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam. There are as many as four interesting

stone inscriptions here belonging to the periods of the rulers, Parakesari Varman (907-955 A. D.) and Achuthappa Naik (1560-1600 A. D.) the well known Naik King. They refer to various landed endowments made to the temple. The fact that this sacred sthalam has been extolled by Thirugnana-sambandhar in his Padhigams shows that the temple was in existence even before Seventh Century A. D. It is learnt that the present structure of this temple was built some three hundred years ago. Renovations were made recently in the year 1959 and a Kumbabishegam was performed. The Cauvery to the north of the temple and Meignana Theertham, a holy tank to the west of the temple are the sacred Theerthams of this shrine.

The presiding deity Sri Thurai Kattum Vallalarswamy is a *Swayambu Lingam facing east.* Situated in a separate sanctum facing south stands His divine consort Veitholi Amman who has been celebrated in the Thevaram. The impcsing images of the Dwara Palakas with four arms at the entrance of the Moolavar sannadhi are striking. There are also separate shrines here for Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Goddess Lakshmi, Natarajar, Somaskandhar, Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar. The image of Sri Arumugaswamy with twelve hands is very inspiring.

There are also uthsava vigrahams of Sri Vinayagars Subramaniar, Somaskandhar, Adi Poora Amman, Chokkar, Chandrasekarar, Pradhosha Vinayagar, Bikshadanar, Mari Amman, Pidari Amman, Natarajar, Sivakami Amman, Sambandhar and Manickavasagar.

Poojas are performed six times daily by hereditary priest, according to the principles of Karana and Kamika Agamam. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver donated by devotees and worth about Rs. 5,000. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 367·70 acres of both wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 19,000 by way of rent. This sum is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its maintenance. There are three ancient vahanas made of wood viz., rishabam, horse and pea-cock.

Adi Pooram, Padhinettam Perukku, Navarathri, Karthigai Deepam and Arudhra Darsanam are the important annual festivals celebrated here, which attract thousands of devotees from the neighbouring villages and taluks.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam, who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

Legend has it that the Lord of this place had twice helped and guided His bewildered devotees by showing the "*Thurai*" (ghat) when the unfordable Cauvery was in spate. Once it was to Arulvithan who having crossed the river to gather flowers for worship as was his wont, could not recross it and reach the temple. Next time it was to Saint Gnanasambandhar who having reached the banks of the Cauvery in the course of his pilgrimage could not cross the river to worship the Lord in the temple on the other side. To both of them the Lord showed the way and showered His blessings. Hence He was called "Thurai Kattum Vallalar." Besides it is also said that an Asura by name Kabithan had also worshipped the Lord and attained eternal bliss. Devotees flock to this shrine in large numbers to seek in all humility His guidance for crossing the stream of life.

PERAMBUR

Sri Subramaniaswamy Temple

Perambur is situated at a distance of about fourteen kilometres south of Mayuram town. The nearest railway station is Manganallur at a distance of about six kilometres. The place is well served by Town buses from Mayuram. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 2,229.

The temple is a small one but the deity is believed to be powerful. The Moolavar is Sri Subramania Swamy and His divine consort is Devasena Ambal.

There is no specific information about the age of the temple but is claimed that it was constructed by King Raja Raja Chola. It is also said that a merchant carried out certain improvements and constructed the Rajagopuram.

It is believed that this merchant who migrated from Chettinad settled as a dealer in pepper in this locality. He was so much devoted to the Lord of this place that he spent his entire earnings on the renovation of this temple and died in this place. In commemoration of this, a stone idol in his name has been installed facing the Lord in the front mandapam.

The area of the temple is roughly three acres. There are two prakarams and a 125 feet high Rajagopuram. The temple tank adjoins the outer prakarams on the southern side.

The Moolavar is a granite image with six faces. He is seated on his favourite peacock vahana. The height of the Moolavar vigraham is about five feet. On either side of the Moolavar are installed the idols of Valli and Deivayanai.

The Uthsavar vigraham with one face only is seated on the peacock vahana along with Goddesses Valli and Deivayanai. The ferocious Samharamurthy's festival idol is also there.

There are separate sancta for Dakshinamurthy, Vinayagar, Mahalakshmi, Lord Siva known as Brahamapureeswarar and Goddess Parvathi known as Anandavalli Ambal within the inner prakaram. Five poojas are performed every day by Gurukkals.

There are jewels made of both gold and silver and their value is estimated at Rs. 6,000. Most of them were offerings made by the devotees. Of these jewels, the crown and the spear (Vel) are noteworthy as they are embedded with costly stones.

There are 170·00 acres of wet and 46·00 acres of dry lands and coconut groves belonging to the temple. The lands are all leased out and the annual income is about Rs. 43,000.

The income from the lands is utilised for the upkeep and maintenance of the temple and the balance is deposited in the bank in the name of the temple.

Hundi collection is estimated at about Rs. 100 per year. Marriages are performed in fulfillment of the vows taken by some of the devotees at this temple and a fee of Re. 1 is charged for each such marriage. The income from such sources is estimated at Rs. 100 per year.

There are wooden vahanas, viz., horse, peacock, rishabam, elephant, bootham, surya-prabhai, swan, ajah (goat) etc.

According to the Executive Officer of the temple, these vahanas are in existence for the last forty years and their estimated cost is Rs. 10,000.

The important annual festivals celebrated in the temple are the following: Tamil New Year's Day, Avani Moolam, Vijaya Dhasami, Thirukkarthigai, Thiruvadhirai and Skandha Sashti.

Of these festivals, Skandha Sashti celebrated for seven days is said to be the most important one attracting quite a large number of devotees.

The management of the temple vests with a Board of Trustees consisting of five members and an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

It is believed that due to the power of this deity, nobody has died of snake-bite so far in this locality even though the place is infested with snakes. In and around this temple, there are Iluppai Thopes owned by the temple. It is also believed that anybody who attempts to pilfer the usufructs of the Iluppai trees will be scared away by the snakes.

ILUPPAPATTU

H/O MANAMEDU (P)

Sri Neelakandeswarar Temple

Iluppapattu is situated at a distance of about twenty kilometres from Mayuram. The nearest railway station is Vaitheeswarankoil at a distance of thirteen kilometres. The population of Manamedu Panchayat according to 1961 Census is 4,598.

This is one of the sixty-three sacred Saivite sthalams on the northern bank of the Cauvery which have been immortalised in the sacred Thevaram.

It is seen from the Sthala Puranam written by Vidwan Sri Meenakshisundaram Pillai of Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam that Sundaramurthy Swamigal has referred to this place as "*Pazhamanni padikkarai*" due to the fact that the course of the Manniar river which once flowed close to this place was diverted so as not to cause any damage to the temple of this place during floods in the river. The place was known for its Iluppai tree and thus it got the name '*Iluppapattu*', or *Madhuha vanam* in Sanskrit.

The deity of this temple is known as Neelakandeswarar. Padikkarai Nayakar, Neelakandesar, Muktheesar, Paramesar and Magatheesar are the five lingams enshrined here. This place is considered to be a sacred one. The divine consort of the Lord is known as Mangalanayaki and Amuthakaravalli.

The Sthala Viruksham is Iluppai Tree which also acquired a boon from the Lord that those who use the Iluppai oil for lighting the wick lamps of the temple should be deemed to have used ghee derived from cow's milk.

The temple occupies roughly an area of about 2·5 acres. The temple is constructed with one prakaram, seven sancta

and a Rajagopuram. The festival deities are known as Sri Neelakandeswarar and Sri Amuthakaravalli.

Poojas are performed four times a day by a Brahmin Gurukkal following the Kamika Agama system. The priest is paid from the temple both in cash and in kind. The temple owns about three hundred acres of both wet and dry lands and two houses. The annual income of the temple is Rs. 21,000. The place has many legendary associations.

The temple tank here is known as *'Nachu poigai'*. The legend concerning the tank is as follows: The Pandavas after having lost everything in gambling were driven out of their kingdom by Dutyodhana and they resorted to the forests. Dharmaputhra, the eldest among the Pandavas approached a sage by name Romesa who advised him to visit Iluppapattu and offer worship to Lord Neelakandeswarar for regaining all that they had lost. Accordingly the Pandavas came to Iluppapattu and started offering worship to Lord Neelakandar, Uma Devi and Vinayagar. On hearing this, Duryodhana with a view to kill the Pandavas, arranged for poisoning the water of the tank. But due to the grace of Lord Neelakandar, the poisoned water did not harm the Pandavas. Their prayers were also granted. It is believed that from that day onwards, the tank here (Brahma Theertham) is known as 'Nachu Poigai' (*'Nachu'* meaning poison).

The temple is under the management of Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam.

INSCRIPTIONS

Five inscriptions have been copied from this temple. Two Vijayanagara Kings, Vira Bhoopathi (1408 A.D.) and Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A. D.) are mentioned in the epigraphs.

THE VILLAGE: According to the epigraph, the village is called Thiruppadikkarai in Rajaraja Valanadu, a

sub-division of Virudharaja Bhayankara Valanadu situated between the rivers Cauvery and Kollidam.

THE DEITY: The name of the deity is mentioned as Thirunilakandamudaiya Nayanar. Besides the above, the epigraphs also mention Parasurameswaramudaiyar and Viswesvaramudaiya Nayanar.

THE GIFTS: In 1408 A. D. King Vira Bhoopathi gifted tax-free lands as sarva-manya to the Sthanikas of the temple for providing offerings etc. Krishna Devaraya remitted the taxes *Jodi* and *Sulavari* in favour of the temple. An undated inscription states that an image of Chandrasekhara Peruman was taken out and a festival conducted at the instance of the son of Kottai Samanathadhipathi.

THALAINAYAR

Sri Kutramporutheeswaraswamy Temple

About fourteen kilometres to the north of Mayuram lies the sacred sthalam of *Thalai Nayar* which has been eulogised in the Thevaram hymns. It is referred to as "Thirukaruppariyalur" in these hymns. The Vinayaga Nadhi that flows to the west and north of this place lending it a rare beauty of its own is considered very sacred. There is an artificial hill here on which is located the temple of Sattanathar (Thoni Appar) and Perianayaki as in Sirkali. So the place is sometimes called *Melai Kazhi* or West Sirkali. There are several beautiful specimen of sculpture here. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 2,834.

The presiding deity of this shrine Sri Kutramporutha Eswarar (or Kutramporutheeswarar) is a Swayambu Lingam. He is supposed to be the Lord of forbearance blessing those who seek His pardon wherefore He is known as Kutramporutha Eswarar. His divine consort is Kolvalai Amman.

The temple covers an area about 0·80 acre and presents an inspiring view with its front gopuram. There are four prakarams, two sancta and two beautiful vimanams with attractive plaster figures on them apart from a spacious mandapam. The origin of this temple is not clear. After several renovations by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam, a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1952. There are several stone inscriptions here on the inner walls of the temple. There are also a number of festival images for several deities, all made of panchalogam. The sacred Theerthams of this temple are the Vinayagar Theertham, Nimba Pushkarani, Sanga Pushkarani, Potramarai and Sengazhuneer Thadagam. The holy Mullai Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here. It is said that Sundarar and Sambandhar visited this place, worshipped the Lord and sung sacred Padhigams in praise of the Lord.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 3,000. The landed properties of the temple fetch an annual income of about Rs. 13,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its daily rituals and general maintenance.

Legend has it that this place was popularly called Thalai Nayar, perhaps to commemorate the fact that Surya offered worship to the Lord here after he lost his teeth in Daksha Yaga. It is said that Lord Brahma once narrated the glory of this sthalam to the reputed Sage Vasishta who came here, created a Lingam, offered worship to the Lord and attained salvation. Hanumar, Ravana and Sage Agasthya are also said to have worshipped the Lord here.

The temple is managed by the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

Nineteen inscriptions have been copied from this temple. The following kings are represented :

Kulothunga Chola III (1178-1218 A.D.)

Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A.D.)

Vijayanagara ruler Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A.D.)

THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE: The name of the village is referred to as Kulothunga Cholan Thaninayaka Chaturvedimangalam of Tirukkazhumalanadu in Rajadhiraja Valanadu.

THE NAME OF THE DEITY: The name of the deity is given as Parvathi Bhagar. An inscription of Raja Raja III refers to God Thiruchitrambalam Udaiya Kulothunga Cholan Thaninayaka Chaturvedimangalam. It is not known whether the God Thiruchitrambalam Udaiyar and Parvathi Bhagar are identical or refer to two different temples.

The *Sthupi* of the temple was constructed by the wife of a certain cholakularan Mangaladhi Rajan in the fourteenth regnal year of Kulothunga III. A number of niches are found on the walls of this temple carrying label inscriptions. The labels give the names of Cholakularan Mangaladhi Rajan, Thiruvudaiyar Peruman etc. Evidently the niches carried portraits of these persons including the builder. The images are now missing. The present structure of the Parvathy Bhagar shrine in Kutram Porutheeswara Temple was constructed in the fourteenth year of Kulothunga III. The name of the main deity was probably Kutram Porutha Peruman now called Kutram Porutha Eswarar Temple. The Mahasabha of the village made provisions for offerings and worship of the consort of the God Kutram Porutha Peruman set up in the Palliyarai by Pillai Villavarayar in the temple of Udaiyar Parvathy Bhagar in the twentieth year of Raja Raja III. Evidently it refers to a setting up a bronze image of Parvathy in the reign of Raja Raja. In the third year of the same king, an image of Thirugnanasambandha Peruman is also referred to for which provisions were made for early morning services.

Another record dated in the same year refers to a gift of money for offerings during the mid-day service to the

image of Tirugnanampetrapillai (Gnanasambandhar) in the temple of Parvathi Bhagar and to feed the Maheswaras with the food. It also refers to a further gift of money for taking the God in procession and other expenses on the day of Thiruvadhirai.

An undated inscription in the temple mentions that the bathing hall on the rock was a gift of Vikramachola Velar. The label inscription found on the South wall of the central shrine refers to Sundara Pillaiyar referring to the name of the Ganesa image placed in the niche in the same wall. An inscription in the Mahamandapam refers to gift of a garden by Sundara Perumal Pillai for conducting the mid-night service of the God. It is likely that the Ganesa image was installed by this person.

There are a few interesting inscriptions in the temple. During the twentieth year of Rajendra III, a certain person of Iraiyur preferred a complaint for the non-payment of (the balance of) 2,000 Kasu by the Trustees of the temple for a plot of land sold for 12,000 Kasu in the fifteenth year of the king. During the tenth year of King Konerinmaikondan (whose name is not mentioned), arrangements were made for the recovery of taxes due to the king from the temple on the lands granted to it in the thirteenth and thirty-fifth year of the previous ruler which had fallen into arrears from the fourth year of the king.

Kulothunga III issued orders at the instance of Villava-raiyar to the assembly of the village for recovering 78,105 and odd Kalams of paddy as tax which was omitted from being collected. The tax on a veli of land was ten Kalams. Raja Raja III granted certain tenancy concessions to the residents of the village on the representation of their grievances and the same was engraved on the temple of Parvathi Bhagar. A seventh year record of Tribhuvana Chakravarthi, Konerinmaikondan refers to the Royal order at the instance of Brahmendra and Vanadhiraja framing certain rules for the conduct of the meeting of the assembly

of the village and the qualifications of its members. Krishna Devaraya, the Vijayanagara King granted certain taxes to the temple. The Mandapam in front of the shrine is said to have been built by Vikramavelar.

PARASALUR

Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple

According to a popular legend, Lord Siva exhibited his divine dance in eight places which are called Ashta Veerattams of which Parasalur, a village eight kilometres east of Mayuram is one. Population according to 1961 Census is 3,526. There is a well known Siva temple here dedicated to Sri Veeratteswarar or Dakshinapureeswarar. The Lingam in the temple is a Swayambu Lingam. This Sivasthalam is about two kilometres to the south-west of Sembanarkoil railway station on the Mayuram-Tranquebar line.

The temple facing west covers an area of about fifty cents. It has a single prakaram and two vimanams with plaster figures on them. There are several stone inscriptions here.

There is a separate sanctum for the Goddess facing south. There are several other sub-deities here. The festival idols of the God, Goddess and others are made of panchalogam. It is said that Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this sthalam, offered worship and sung several sacred Padhigams in praise of the Lord.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver which include a silver crown and *Padham* for Ambal and *Netripattam* for Swamy etc., all donated by the hereditary Trustee of the temple. The landed properties of the temple fetch an annual income of about Rs. 38,000

by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance.

Adi Pooram, Navarathri, Thiruvadhirai and Sundays of Karthigai month are the festival days. The Karthigai Sunday festival is the most important one, when the deity is taken round in a grand procession. Distribution of sacred Theertham takes place at the end of this festival. The famous festival attracts hundreds of devotees from the neighbouring villages.

The temple is managed by the Adheena Kartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam, who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

Legend has it that any devotee who sets his foot in this sacred place is blessed. He gets rid of the burden of sins by the Lord's grace. It is humorously said that the God robs away the sins of His devotees. The place is, therefore, called Pariyalur ("*Pari*" meaning in Tamil to "*rob*") which subsequently became Parasalur. Here again the Devas got themselves rid of their fear caused by demon Dharuka. According to the Skandha Puranam it was here that Dhaksha, the father-in-law of Siva performed his Yaga. On the southern side of the temple is a tank called Karikulam meaning Charcoal tank. In fact it is believed that if the bed of the tank is dug up, it will be full of charcoal dust to any depth as the tank site is supposed to be the *Yaga Kunda* of Daksha.

INSCRIPTIONS

Three inscriptions have been copied from the temple, one dated in the reign of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, one in the reign of Konerinmaikondan probably identical with Sundara and the third of the Vijayanagara ruler, Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A.D.)

THE VILLAGE: According to epigraphs, the village is called Pariyalur, alias Rajanarayana Chaturvedimangalam in Vilai Nadu, a sub-division of Jayankonda Cholavalanadu.

THE DEITY: The name of the deity is mentioned as Virattanam Udaiyar.

A FIRE ACCIDENT: From the inscriptions, it is seen that the old stone records in the temple were destroyed in fire and Sundarar ordered the re-engraving of the records on stone and copper. A list of lands amounting fifteen velis of land and three *Ma* in all were thus recorded. The Vijayanagara Emperor Krishna Devaraya remitted *Joti* and *Sulavari* taxes of the village of Pariyalur in favour of the Siva and Vishnu temples of the place (167-1925). The third inscription refers to the gift of thirty velis of land to some Bhattars of Elu Ulakamuladum Udaiya Chaturvedimangalam.

In the inscription the village Pungarkudi is called Pararaja Bhayamkaranallur.

MOOVALUR

Sri Margasahayeswarar Temple

Situated on the southern bank of the Cauvery at a distance of about five kilometres west of Mayuram railway junction, Moovalur is hailed as one of the sacred Saivite centres of the South. The place can be reached by bus from Mayuram. The population according to 1961 Census is 1,945.

Moovalur once abounded in Punnai Trees is known as '*Punnagavana Kshetram*'. The deity is also called Punnagavaneswarar or Margasahayeswaraswamy. The divine consort is Soundaranayaki Amman.

Appar, Sundaramurthy Swamigal and Sekkizhar have sung in praise of this place and the Lord.

The temple is said to have been constructed by Chola Kings. It roughly occupies an area of 1·5 acres. It has

got two prakarams and an imposing Rajagopuram at the entrance of the temple.

The sacred Theerthams of this place are four, viz., Cauvery, Chandra Pushkarani, Durga Pushkarani and Upamanyu Koopam. It is said that a bath in the Cauvery at this place will cure one of any physical malady.

There are several inscriptions engraved on the walls of the temple and its Gopuram belonging to the Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara Kings.

Five poojas are performed every day by Brahmin Gurukkals who are paid salary from the temple funds.

The assessed value of the jewels of the temple is Rs. 21,800. The jewels are all antique. The temple has got 162 acres of both wet and dry lands which have been leased out. The annual income from the lands is estimated at Rs. 29,000. This income is utilised for the general maintenance of the temple and for conducting the periodical festivals.

There is a wooden car and a silver rishaba Vahanam for the temple. Only one festival is celebrated in the Panguni month.

It is believed that the Lord of this place was worshipped by the seven celestial nymphs (*Saptha Mathargal*) viz., Mageswari, Koumari, Chamundy, Vaishnavi, Brahmani, Varahi and Indrani and in support of this anecdote, the shrines of these seven deities have been installed in this temple to the west of the shrine of the Goddess.

It is said that Lord Siva had married Sri Durga Devi in this place and the legend about this is as follows:

Once upon a time there was a formidable demon with the head of a buffalo. '*Mahisha Suran*' as he was called, did severe penance and obtained a boon from Lord Siva to the effect that he would not die from the hands of a

male. Because of the haughtiness instilled by this boon, he was harassing Gods and mortals alike with the result the Gods approached Mahavishnu for safety. They were directed by Him to seek the help of Sakthi. The Devas resorted to Goddess Parvathi who took the form of Durga. After a fierce encounter, She annihilated the demon with the *Soolayudham* (spear) obtained from Lord Siva. Durga prayed to Lord Siva again and requested that She should regain her original form. Lord Siva directed Her to offer worship to the Lingam in Moovalur. He also created a tank of holy waters. Durga Devi, after adhering to this instruction of Lord Siva, regained Her original form. The Lord is supposed to have married Durga Devi in the place after transforming her into a woman of exquisite beauty. To commemorate this incident, even now a marriage festival is conducted in this place in the Tamil month of Panguni.

The Lingam is Swayambu. The legend about this is briefly as follows:

Once upon a time three demons — Vidhunmali, Tharakakshan and Kamalakshan having become haughty because of their powers were harassing men and Gods. The Devas went and surrendered themselves to Lord Parameswara and requested protection. Lord Siva assured them help and waged a severe war against the three Asuras and ultimately killed them. This war is known as '*Thripura Samharam*' in the Puranas. After this, the Gods became a little inflated and asserted that they alone were responsible for the downfall of the Asuras. With a view to reform them, Lord Parameswara reduced all the Gods except Thirumal and Brahma to ashes. Thirumal and Brahma having realised the mistake of the Gods, prayed to Lord Parameswara and requested Him to excuse the Devas and bring them back to life. Lord Parameswara directed them to offer worship to the Lingam under the Punnai Tree in Moovalur. Lord Thirumal and Brahma searched for the Lingam at the place but could not find it out. Lord Parameswara Himself thereupon showed the

Lingamurthy and also indicated how to offer worship by Himself doing it. Lord Thirumal and Brahma followed suit. As these three viz., Parameswara, Thirumal and Brahma Deva offered worship to the Lingamurthy at this place, the place, is known as '*Moovarar*' which subsequently changed into '*Moovalur*' The Lord of this place is known as *Vazhikattum Vallal* (the Lord who showed the way).

There is a Board of Trustees besides an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department for administering the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

Fifteen inscriptions were copied from this temple. The following kings are represented in inscriptions :

Vikrama Chola (1118-1135 A. D.)

Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A. D.)

Rajendra III (1246-1279 A. D.)

Sri Vallabha Pandya

Vijayanagar rulers Veera Virupanna, Achuta Deva.

The Tanjore Nayaks Achuthanayaka (1560-1600 A. D.)

Sevappa Nayaka (1532-1560 A. D.)

THE VILLAGE : The name of the village is mentioned as Thirumuvalur in Thiruvazhundur Nadu, a sub-division of Jayankonda Cholavalanadu.

NAME OF THE DEITY : The name of the deity is referred to as Thirumuvalur Udaiya Nayanar, Vazhithunai Nayanar and Margasahayar. Besides the above, an inscription of Vikrama Chola refers to a temple of Maduranthaka Vinnagar Alwar probably a Vishnu temple of that place.

An inscription of Vijayanagara ruler Vira Virupanna records that the temple of Kazha Koothar was destroyed by

fire and the lands belonging to the God was transferred to the main temple. Evidently a temple dedicated to Kazha Koothar was destroyed by fire in the Fourteenth Century. The inscription of Rajendra III refers to an image of *Koothaadum Devar* (Natarajar) in the temple. This should have been a bronze image, probably gifted during the period.

GIFTS : Gold ornaments and articles of worship were gifted to the God and Goddess of the temple by a certain Selvapillai Andar in the reign of Kulothunga III. A certain Meiboganayakar, son of Ramappa Nayakar made provisions for the renewal of cake offerings in the temple for the merit of the Vijayanagara ruler Achutha Deva. Sevappa Nayaka, one of the Tanjore Nayaks gifted thirteen velis of lands for maintaining a feeding house attached to the temple of Marga Sahayar. A certain Pillai Perumal Chedirayar gifted land for repairs to the temple. The gopuram carries an inscription in praise of this chieftain, Chedirayar also called Pillai Perumal and Sadayan. In all probability the gopuram was built by the Chief.

KUTTALAM

Sri Ukthavedheeswaraswamy Temple

Kuttalam is at a distance of about ten kilometres from Mayuram on the Mayuram-Kumbakonam railway line and is well served by Town buses from Mayuram. Saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar had visited this village and sung in praise of Lord. The place is referred to as "*Thiruthuruthi*" in the Thevaram. The population according to 1961 Census is 8,519.

There is an ancient Saivite temple situated right in the centre of the village. It has two prakarams covering about an acre. The presiding deity of the temple is referred to as Ukthavedheeswarar and the Goddess is Arubanavanamulai Amman. The God is facing west, while the Goddess is

facing south. The Rajagopuram with seven Kalasams at the entrance to the Swamy temple presents a beautiful appearance.

The temple tank is situated on the north-western corner of the outer prakaram which is known as Sundara Theertham. To the west of the tank is situated the Sundaramurthy Temple. It is believed that a bath in the temple tank cured Sundarar of some illness and he sang in praise of the God apparently as a token of gratitude for the divine grace.

The sthala Viruksham is *Uttala* tree. It would appear that the place was named after the tree which is seen nowhere else.

It is believed that in this temple, Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi revealed themselves as Manavalanathar and Narunjandhimulai Ammayar in wedding guise. This accounts for the temple being referred to as Kalyana Alayam in the stone inscriptions. Very near the temple the sacred Cauvery flows. It is believed that this temple was constructed during the Chola period (Tenth Century) and was completed by King Raja Raja Chola. There are stone inscriptions dating back to the period of kings Raja Raja Chola (985-1014 A. D.), Rajendra Chola (1012-1044 A. D.), Vikrama Chola (1120-1135 A. D.), Kampanna Udaiyar II and also of Krishna Devarayar of Vijayanagaram (1509-1529 A. D.)

Other deities like Vinayagar, Manavalanathar, Subramanya and Narunjandhimulai Ammayar are also enshrined in the temple.

Five poojas are performed every day following the Karana Kamika Agama system. The poojas are performed by Brahmin Gurukkals. The Gurukkals are paid from the temple funds and they also get a share of the offerings made in cash by the devotees.

The temple is under the management of the Dharmapura Adheenam. There are 99·65 acres of wet and 105·13 acres of dry lands besides two houses. The lands have been leased out for an annual rent of about Rs. 20,000 and

this amount is utilised for conducting the festivals and up-keep and maintenance of the temple.

There are two old temple cars, two palanquins and vahanas like rishabam, horse, bandicoot and Kamadhenu. There are also jewels worth Rs. 2,500.

The following seven festivals are celebrated in this temple every year: Chithira Pournami (Brahmothsavam), Karthigai Somavaram, Fridays in Tamil month of Thai, Navarathri in Purattasi month, Sivarathri in Masi month, Skandha Sahsti (in Ayppasi) and Karthigai Deepam (in Karthigai month). Of these seven festivals, the Brahmothsavam is the most important one attracting the local population in large numbers.

Sri Choleswaraswamy Temple :

Another ancient Siva temple in Kuttalam is dedicated to Sri Choleswarar. The divine consort is called Soundara-nayaki Amman. Said to have been built during the rule of Vikrama Chola (1120-1135 A. D.), the temple was renovated and a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1958.

The temple facing east and spreading over an area of ninety-nine cents has a Rajagopuram and two prakarams. To the north of the shrine is a small tank. Sundays in the month of Karthigai are celebrated as festival days. There is a legend to the effect that Agni, the Lord of fire installed the God here. This temple comes under the purview of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

Sri Omkareswara Temple :

This is yet another Siva temple in Kuttalam. The temple was built during the reign of Kulothunga III. According to the information furnished by the temple no festival is being celebrated in the temple. Poojas are, however, performed four times daily.

INSCRIPTIONS

Epigraphs have been copied from the three following temples in Kuttalam.

Choleswara, Omkareswara, and Uktavedhiswara

Choleswara temple :

Only one epigraph has been noticed in the temple. It is dated in the fourth regnal year of a king whose name is not mentioned. It mentions an order of Jayadhara Pallavarayar who figures in an inscription of Kulothunga III found in the same village. The present inscriptions in the temple of Choleswara must also be assigned to Kulothunga III. The name of the Choleswara temple is recorded Vikramacholiswaram Udaiyar. Evidently the temple was built in the reign of Vikrama Chola and named after him (477 of 1907.) An inscription in the Omkareswara Temple, in the same village dated the reign of Konerinmaikondan also refers to this temple.

Omkareswara Temple :

Seven inscriptions have been copied from this temple. Most of the inscriptions belong to the reign of Kulothunga III. The remaining mention only the title of the king as Thirubhuvana Chakravarthi Konerinmaikondan without mentioning the king's name. They are also to be assigned to the reign of Kulothunga III.

An inscription found on the north wall of the mandapam in front of the shrine records that the temple of Omkareswaramudaiya Nayanar was built by Araiyan Aludaiya Nayakanar alias Jayadhara Pallavarayar in the twenty-fifth year of Kulothunga III. Evidently the temple and the mandapam have come into existence in the reign of Kulothunga III. The deity is mentioned as Omkareswaramudaiyar and Omkaresvaramudaiya Parameswar. The same Chief Jayadhara Pallavarayar also called Pillai Jayadhara Pallavarayar gifted lands to the temple.

A gift of land to the temple was made in Pallavanarayana Puram alias Ulagamadevi Puram in Thiruvalundurnadu in the reign of Kulothunga III.

Ukthavedhiswara Temple :

The following kings are represented in the epigraphs.
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A. D.)
Rajendra I (1012-1044 A. D.)
Rajendra II (1057-1063 A. D.)
Vikrama Rajendra III (1246-1279 A. D.)
Kumara Kampans
Krishna Devaraya (1509-1529 A. D.)

THE DEITY : The deity is referred to as Thirutturuthi Udaiya Mahadeva, Sonnavaar Arivaar and Thirukkarrali Mahadeva. The name Sonnavaar Arivaar is of interest. The deity of this temple is sung by Sundaramurthy Nayanar as Sonnavaar Arivaar.

THE TEMPLE : According to epigraphs the present structure was constructed by Sembiyan Madeviyar, the mother of Uthama Chola in the seventh regnal year (992 A. D.) of Raja Raja I (103-1926). The mandapam in front of the shrine was also built in the same period. It carries inscriptions of Vikrama Chola and others. In an undated epigraph, the temple is called Kalyanalaya. The outer and inner compound walls of the Goddess shrine and the Gopuram were erected by certain Pippali Chidambara Dikshithar in A. D. 1630 (107-1926). He also established a street leading to the Cauvery and named it Chidambara-Dikshith Puram.

GIFTS : Sembiyan Madevi, the noble queen who erected the temple gifted lands for provisions for offerings, worship, music and other expenses and for reciting the Sama Vedha, Taitiriya and Chandoga Saama, in the temple. A certain Siva Dhanma Sekharan Paramatman of Viracholanallur gifted lands for feeding Siva-yogies. At mid-day service in the temple is for the prosperity of Rajendra I's arms (99 of 1926). A certain Adavallan, a merchant of Venkaadan of

Gangaikondacholapuram gifted twenty-five Kasu for feeding Siva Brahmanas during the mid-day service for the prosperity of the arms of Rajendra II (102 of 1926). For feeding Siva devotees in order to secure success to the arms of the same king, a native of Gangaikondacholapuram gifted money (486 of 1907). A fifth year record of Rajendra II records the gift of tax free lands for conducting certain festivals on the king's birthday and also for the festival of Margazhi Thiruvadhirai. Viranarayanan Kuttatali, a Valangai Velaikkaran gifted 350 Kalanju of gold for conducting mid-night worship Kumara Kampana, the Vijayanagara ruler remitted certain taxes to the temple. At the request of Basavarasa on the occasion of Mamangam festival, Krishna Devaraya, the celebrated Vijayanagara ruler gifted the proceeds of the taxes Jodi and Sula Vari amounting to ninety Pon in favour of the temple.

Rajendra I gifted the village Kaverinallur as tax free land to the temple. Portion of the village had been confiscated as Vallam Vagai from a certain Nagan Aditha Pidaran for a certain crime committed by him and the rest had been acquired by purchase or exchange (100 of 1926)

BRONZES : An image of Porpalagai Vitankar is mentioned in the reign of Raja Raja I.

The village Kuttalam :

The original name of the village was Thiru Turuthi a great Saivite Sthala celebrated by the three Saivite Saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar. The name of the village is mentioned as Vinguinir Thiru Turitti in Thiruvalundurnadu, a sub-division of Jayankondacholavalanadu. In some inscriptions, Jayamkondacholavalanadu is also referred to as Tenkarai Rajavaryanavalanadu. An inscription in the twenty-ninth year of probably Kulothunga III refers to Kulothunga Cholan Kutralam in Viruddharaya-bhayankara Valanadu. It is not known whether the present name Kutralam is derived from this (483-1907). In the sixteenth year of Kulothunga Chola I, a revenue survey is said to have been conducted (483-1907). The king is referred to as Sungam Tavirtha Kulothunga Chola Deva.

MANAKUDI

Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple

Manakudi temple is one of the twenty-seven temples under the Dharmapura Adheenam. This village is situated on the northern bank of the Cauvery river three kilometres east of Mayuram and is well connected by Town buses from Mayuram. The nearest railway station, Mayuram Town is about three kilometres away from this place. Population according to 1961 Census is 2,033.

The exact age of the temple is not known though it is believed to be an ancient one. The temple occupies an area of about fifty cents and is situated in the midst of fertile lands. It has only one prakaram and there is no gopuram (tower). The presiding deity is Sri Sundareswarar and this divine consort is Soundaranayaki Amman. Lord Sundareswarar is facing east, while the Goddess is facing south. Deities like Ganapathi, Natarajar, Somaskandhar, Subramaniar, Thirumal and Bairavar have their shrines in this temple.

The temple tank is known as Kalyana Theertham. Two poojas are performed every day one in the morning and the other in the evening following the Sivagama system. The poojas are performed by Brahmin Gurukkals. They are paid salary from the temple funds.

The temple has properties in the form of both wet and dry lands which have been leased out. The amount derived about Rs. 4,000 per annum is utilised for the conduct of festivals and upkeep of the temple.

The important festival of the temple is "*Thiruvadhirai Thirunal*" celebrated in the Tamil month Margazhi. During this festival, Lord Natarajar is taken out in procession in the streets. The affairs of the temple are managed by a Superintendent appointed by the Dharmapura Adheenam.

The following is the legend about this temple. Himavan, the great Mountain King by severe *Tapas* obtained Uma Devi as his daughter, but his anxiety to secure a worthy husband for Her was greater than his joy over Her birth. To allay his anxiety, Uma Herself went into Tapas to find Her Lord. The Lord appeared before Her and promised to come to the world as a bridegroom and marry Her. The Muhurtham too was fixed. The Lord who was coming in the guise of a bridegroom to Manakudi chose to rest for a while. Even today Lord Sundaresar in this temple could be seen as taking rest. And of such exquisite beauty is the workmanship of the image of Natarajar here, that anyone looking at it is tempted to behold it for ever, even as the Lord who chose to rest for a while continued to take rest.

INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions belonging to this temple are fragments and are built into the ground. Evidently the earlier structure bearing inscriptions have undergone repairs. From the available fragments it is learnt that the village was called Manakudi alias Uthamachola Chathurvedimangalam. The epigraph refers to certain agreements between the Vellalas of the village and the temple.

SEMBANARKOIL

Sri Swarnapureeswarar Temple

About ten kilometres from Mayuram on the Mayuram-Tranquebar road is Sembanarkoil which has the famous Saivite temple of Swarnapureeswarar. The population according to 1961 Census is 2,236. Situated on the southern bank of the sacred river Cauvery, Sembanarkoil is popularly called as "*Thiruchempon palli*". This ancient and sacred Sivasthalam had been visited by Appar and Thirugnansambandhar who have glorified it in their sacred padhigams.

According to the Sathala Puranam, the temple dates back to Aditya I, the Chola King who ruled during 871

to 907 A.D. The temple facing east covers an area of about one acre and seventy cents. It has a single prakaram and two sancta and two beautiful vimanams. The Moolavar Sri Swarnapureeswarar is a Swayambu Lingam. He is also popularly known as Sri Swarnalaksheesar, Devapriyar, Dhathavarar and Chempon Palliyar. Situated in a separate sanctum facing west stands His divine consort Sri Maruvar Kuzhali Ammai who is also known as Pushpazagy, Dhakshayani Sugantha Koonthalambigai and Sugantha Vananayagi. The beautiful image of the Ambal is very enchanting to look at and is said to remind the devotee of the beautiful visage of Sri Meenakshi Amman of Madurai. Vinayagar, Surya Lingam, Chandra Lingam, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Indra, Ganapathi, Dakshinamurthy, Arthanareeswarar, Durgai, Visvanathar, Srinivasa Perumal, Nalvar, Balasubramaniar, Gajalakshmi, Chandikeswarar, Veerabadrar, Bairavar, Suryar and Chandikeswari are the other deities enshrined here. There are also festival idols of Somaskandhar Natarajar, Chandra Sekharar and others made of Panchalogam.

Poojas are performed four times a day by hereditary Brahmin priests according to the principles of the Karana Agamam. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 100 acres of wet and 18·45 acres of dry lands and four houses which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 13,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are several ancient vahanas here, viz., peacock, rishabam, horse, swan, and bandicoot apart from *Ther* (car) and a palanquin all made of wood.

Of the several festivals celebrated here almost throughout the year, the Chithirai Festival which spreads over a period of twelve days deserves special mention. On these days, Surya is supposed to be worshipping the Lord here and in evidence of this, the rays of the Sun fall on the Lingam. About 5,000 devotees from the neighbouring villages attend this famous festival and have their prayers granted.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

Legend has it that the presiding deity of this shrine was once glittering like gold and hence the place came to be known as Sembanarkoil. Some scholars are of the opinion that this place was once a centre of Jainism and so it was also called as Thiruchempon Palli. It is said that this was the birth place of the reputed Saint Veerabadrar. Rathi Devi is supposed to have performed a severe penance here and got Manmatha as her husband by the grace of the Lord. Lakshmipuri, Indrapuri and Kandhapuri are the other names of this sthalam as Goddess Lakshmi, Devendra and Muruga worshipped the Lord here and received His blessings. Surya Theertham is the sacred Theertham of this sthalam and the Vanni Tree is the Sthala Viruksham.

According to a popular legend in vogue, once a famous king by name Brigu came to this place to clear the forest area. As he could not clear the gigantic trees, he was perplexed. Later Sage Agasthya who came there narrated to him the glory of this place and informed him of the existence of the sacred golden Lingam which was worshipped by the King Swarna Roma, who got rid of his incurable disease by the grace of the Lord. Accordingly, the king found out the Lingam and erected a beautiful shrine at this place after clearing the area.

There are several interesting and informative stone inscriptions here belonging to the periods of the Kings Kulothunga Chola III and the Tanjore King Saraboji.

INSCRIPTIONS

Six inscriptions (170 - 175 of 1925) have been copied from this temple. The following kings are represented in the inscriptions.

Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A. D.)
Sarfoji.

Fragmentary inscriptions in the mandapam refer to certain Rajakesari Varman who may be identical with Raja Raja I (985 - 1014 A. D.)

VILLAGE: The name of the temple is called Thiru Semponpalli. The temple is said to be in Abhimanarmerunallur, a western hamlet of Akkur. Akkur which was also called Rajendrasimha Chaturvedimangalam is said to be in Akkur Nadu, a sub-division of Jayamkonda Cholavala Nadu.

THE SHRINES: The deity is called Thiru Semponpalli Udaiyar in the inscriptions of the Cholas. However, in the inscription of the Mahratta Ruler Sarfoji the deity is called Sempon Nadar. Probably this gave rise to the present name of Sembanarkoil to the village.

GIFTS: The earliest record dated in the sixth year of Rajakesari (Raja Raja I) records the gift of lands for the welfare of the king. An inscription of Rajadhi Raja II also records the gift of certain lands for worship and offering in the temple for the welfare of the king. A certain Gautaman Pujyadevan Thiru Venkatamudaiyan and others gifted forty kasu for burning a *Sandhi vilakku* in the temple.

An inscription of interest recorded in the reign of Kulothunga III records an agreement at the request of Chakravarthi Akkur Nadalvar by the Devan Adiyar and Nyayattar of the temple that they would continue to conduct the celebration of the temple festival in honour of the Nayanar Therur Urvalar Ulalvar, whose image with those of the other Nayanars had been removed to the Pillaiyar Temple of Thiruvidaikkali owing to bad times in the eleventh year of the King's predecessor (Rajadhi Raja II) and that they would construct the gateway called Tappaada Vediyar Thiruvaasal, the north wall and the car stand which had fallen down in cyclone. The record of Sarfoji refers to an agreement given to the temple by the inhabitants of a number of villages belonging to the temple to collect some taxes from the villages and arrange for their protection.

KUMBAKONAM TALUK

KUMBAKONAM

1. Sri Adhi Kumbeswaraswamy Temple

Known as a great temple town and one of the important among the seven holy cities of India, Kumbakonam is a well known pilgrim centre for both Saivites and Vaishnavites alike. Along with Thanjavur, this city is invariably included in the itinerary of all tourists, Indian and foreign. It is one of the oldest towns of South India and the head-quarters of the taluk of the same name. The population of the famous town according to the 1961 Census is 92,581. The town contains a large number of both Saivite and Vaishnavite shrines of ancient origin and a famous Mutt of Sri Sankaracharya. It can be easily reached by car, bus and train.

From about the end of the Sixth Century A. D. it seems to have been under the rule of the Pallavas. During the Seventh Century A. D. it was the capital of the famous Chola Kings. The reputed Kumbeswaraswamy Temple here is the most ancient of all India importance. Kumbakonam is noted for the sacred Mahamaham Tank right in the heart of the town. This tank, a fine revetted reservoir surrounded by picturesque mandapams is the centre of Mahamaham Festival celebrated once in twelve years, in honour of Kumbeswaraswamy. This festival takes place once in twelve years when Jupiter stays in Leo and the Sun in Aquairius and people flock to it from every part

of Southern India and from even greater distances. Bathing in the tank at this time is considered by the religious people to be holy.

Appar who was a contemporary of the Pallava Prince Mahendra I and Thirugnanasambandhar, his younger contemporary had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord. Thirugnanasambandhar gives a graphic description of the town which is situated on the bank of the river Cauvery. The cool town with its picturesque plantain and mango groves are well protected with fortifications. It is interesting to note that this town is mentioned in the inscriptions as '*Thirukkudamukku*' i. e., (Vadakarai Pambur Nattu Devadanam Thirukkudamukku). The Thevaram hymnists and the Vaishnavite saints also refer to this place as Thirukkudamukku. It is not precisely known as to how the town got this name.

The presiding deity of this shrine Lord Kumbeswara is a Swayambu Lingam. His consort is known as Mangalambigai who is in a standing pose. Amudha Kumbesar and Amudheesar are the other beautiful names of the Lord. This ancient temple was in existence even in the Seventh Century A. D. since Appar and Sambandhar have praised the Lord in their Thevaram. It is said that it was built by a Chola King who ruled over this place and the temple building itself would seem to have been added to and improved by the Nayak Rulers. Subsequently a grand Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1959. Some of the old images here like Ambal, Durgai and Kirathamoorthy bear the impress of the antiquity about them.

Situated in the heart of the town facing east, the temple covers an area of about four acres and 33·75 cents and bears several interesting stone inscriptions. It has a big nine-tier Rajagopuram in front about 128 feet in height which contains many figures of rare and exquisite beauty. There are four broad prakarams to the temple in which rows of houses, shops and many tiny shrines dedicated to Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Bikshadanar, Saptha Kannigais, Lakshmi etc., are found. The famous Mahamaham Tank

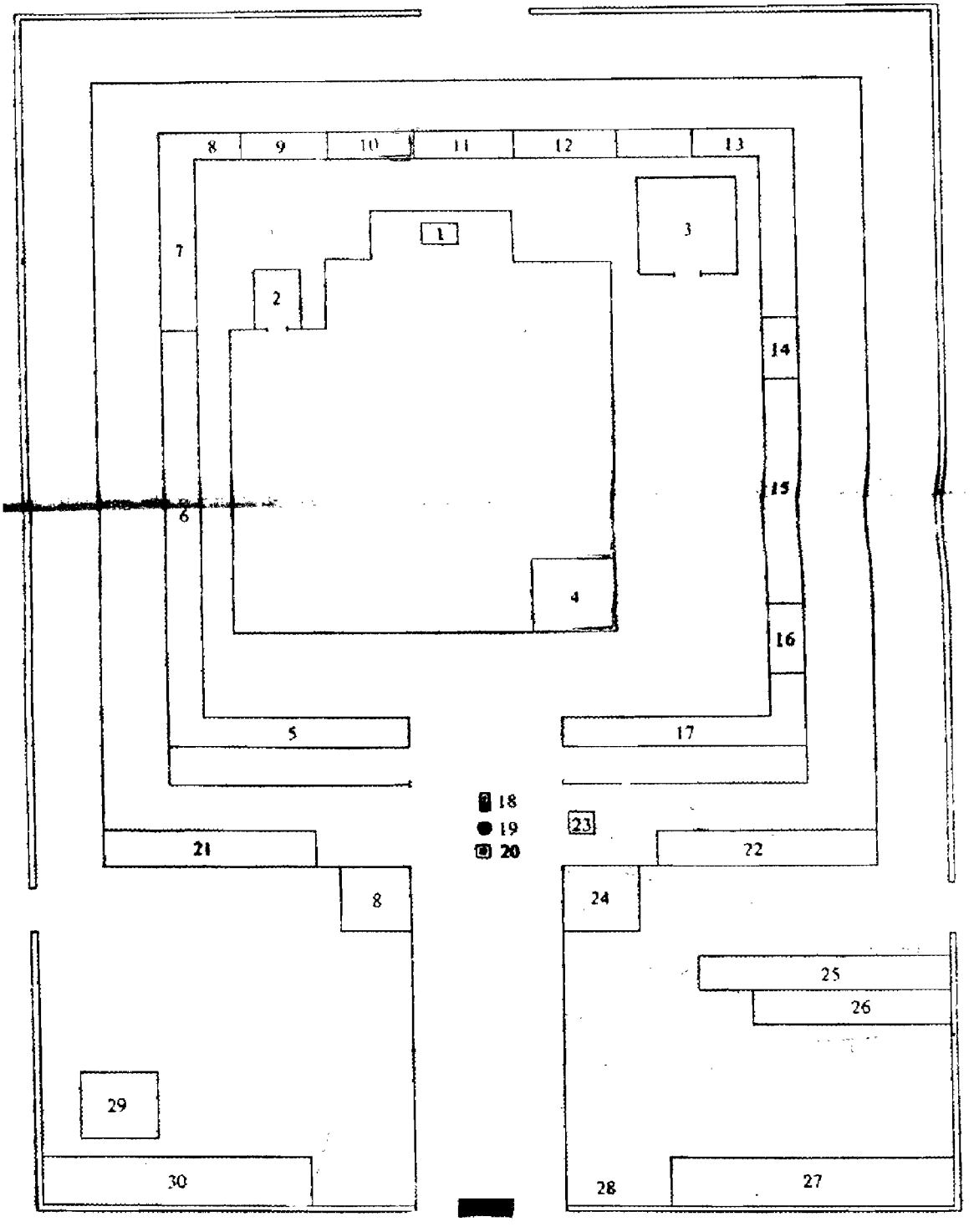
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

1. Adhi Kumbeswarar (Moolavar)
2. Somaskandhar
3. Periyanayagi (Moolavar)
4. Natarajar
5. Adhikara Nanhi
6. Sixty-three Nayanmars
7. Saptha Kanniars & Ashtalingams
8. Vinayagar
9. Bikshadanar
10. Murugar (Uthsavar)
11. Karthikeya
12. Sivalingam
13. Lakshmi
14. Palliarai
15. Kattalai Rooms
16. Kiradhamurthi
17. Bairavar
18. Nandhi
19. Balipeedam
20. Dwajasthambam
21. Madapalli
22. Yagasalai
23. Navagrahas
24. Dhandayuthapani
25. Kalyana Mandapam & Devasthanam Office
26. Elephant Stable
27. Thirukkulam
28. Cow Shed
29. Sthalaviruksham
30. Garden

SRI ADHI KUMBESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

KUMBAKONAM

(Not to Scale)



which covers an area of about twenty acres surrounded on all sides by picturesque mandapams is the sacred Theertham of the temple. There is a small shrine for Vinayagar on the bank of this huge tank popularly known as *Kurumbayira* Vinayagar. The holy Vanni Tree in the third prakaram of the temple is the Sthala Viruksham. In the same prakaram, there is a separate shrine for Lord Vinayaga who is locally known as Sri Adhi Vinayagar. According to a legend, this Vinayagar came to this place even before the Lord; hence His name Adhi Vinayagar. There are also separate sancta here for Somaskandhar, Vinayagar, Subramaniar and other deities. Among the several mandapams the large Kalyana Mandapam built and dedicated by a lady devotee by name Balamani Ammal, a popular dramatist of this place at a cost of about Rs. 40,000 deserves special mention. The famous Thirukkalyanam festival takes place in this beautiful hall. Besides, the temple also contains some wonderful pieces of sculpture and architecture.

On a single block of stone in the Navarathri Mandapam all the twenty-seven stars and twelve Rasis (signs) have been artistically carved out. The two beautiful images of Dwara Palakas found near the Dwajasthambam are very enchanting. The idol of Kirathamoorthy is a special feature in the temple and it commemorates the incident that Lord Siva Himself had created the present Mahalingam. The inspiring image of Lord Subramaniar enshrined in a part of the temple is a rare specimen. He has six heads but only six hands, each holding different kinds of weapons. There are two Nathaswarams (musical pipes) made of stone which are attractive and said to have been used by celebrated pipers. They are preserved in good condition.

Poojas are performed six times daily according to the principles of the Siva Agamam. They are paid a monthly salary from the temple funds. Besides they are also entitled to a share in the sale of Archana Tickets. The temple owns antique jewellery made of gold, silver and diamond valued at Rs. 2,72,000. Among the jewels. there is a

string of Danish gold coins. The temple owns about 199·93 acres of wet and 40·79 acres of dry lands apart from ninety-two buildings and several vacant plots which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 70,800 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount Rs. 2,000 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 1,000 per annum. In addition to a number of ancient silver plated and wooden vahanas, which are preserved with great care, there is a silver plated chariot presented by His Holiness Kasi Vasi Thambiran Swamigal of Thirupanandhal Mutt. The temple is also maintaining a library.

Of the festivals celebrated almost every month, throughout the year, the Maham Festival in the month of Masi (February-March) is the most important one. Once in twelve years, the Mahamaham Festival is celebrated when lakhs of pilgrims from far and wide flock to the place and take a bath in the holy Theertham, the Mahamaham Tank. The exact time when the festival takes place is the conjunction of the Moon with the Maka Nakshatra and Jupiter on the Full Moon day of the month of *Magha* (Thai). Jupiter crosses one Rasi or sign in about one year. It comes to *Simha Rasi* or Leo every thirteenth year. *Maga* or Regulus is situated in Leo. The particular date on which the Moon in the month of Magha (Thai) is conjoined with Maka and Jupiter is considered specially sacred. This usually happens on the Full Moon day of the month of Magha (Thai). The Mahamaham Tank is also known as Anuratha Theertham, Kanni Theertham, Papanasa Theertham etc. This is surrounded on all sides by sixteen beautiful mandapams which are stated to have been built in the year 1542.

Legend has it that during *Maha Pralaya* or deluge after *Dwapara Yuga*, a Kumbam (pot) full of Amirtham (Nectar) and seeds for creation was set afloat by Lord Siva. It was proclaimed by the Lord Himself that the place where the pot touched the ground and had its rest would be considered as the holiest of all places in the

world. Since the said Kumbam, as announced by the creator of the world had its rest in the place, it is popularly known as Kumbakonam after that Kumbam. Immediately after its rest, Lord Siva appeared in the guise of a hunter and broke the said Kumbam, full of Amirtham with His arrow. The split Amirtham got pooled together in a place and has become the famous Mahamaham Tank. It is said that Lord Siva then gathered the sand, wet with the remaining Amirtham and spread in the place. He later shaped the sands into Mahalingam popularly called Sri Adhikumbeswarar. It is also said that Lord Brahma, Sri *Moorga Nayanar*, a staunch devotee of the Lord and a devotee by name Sudharman had worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. A noteworthy feature is that unlike the Lingams of other shrines, this Mahalingam is not made of stone. It is formed out of a mixture of sand and nectar and so Abishegams are not performed with watery substances, lest it should dissolve the Lingam.

This temple is managed by a Board of three Honorary Trustees and an Executive Officer, all appointed under the provisions of a scheme of administration settled by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

2. Sri Sarangapaniswamy Temple

The Temple of Sri Sarangapaniswamy is an imposing shrine of Kumbakonam Town. A panoramic tank, Hema Pushkarani separates this temple and Sri Adhikumbeswarar Temple. Its beautiful gopuram consists of twelve storeys and is about 147 feet high. Among the famous "*Nootrettu Thiruppathigal*", (108 sacred Vaishnavite shrines) this sthalam had been given the third place next to Srirangam and Thirupathi.

This ancient shrine dedicated to Lord Vishnu was built more than a thousand years ago. It is supposed to have been built like most other Vaishnavite temples in the district by the Nayak Kings. It is believed that there was an original temple at this place even from the Pallava times. Though the exact age of the temple is not known, there is ample

evidence to show that it was in existence even during the period of early Alwars.

Sri Sarangapaniswamy, Aravamudhar and Sri Komalavalli Thayar are the presiding deities of the temple. The shrine of the Lord is in the form of a chariot. An interesting tradition is attached to the chariot of Lord Sarangapani. Its two entrances based as they are on the movement of the Sun add to the exciting mystery of the shrine. Further additions, namely, the front mandapam around the Dwajasthambam and the Sannadhi of Alwars were made some forty to fifty years back by the then Trustee. The temple covers an area of a little over three acres and has a pagoda and two prakarams. The sanctum and the front mandapams are designed to look like a chariot (Ratham) with wheels and horses.

An unique feature of this temple is that the sanctum sanctorum has two entrances, one in the north is called '*Utharayana Vasal*' and the other in the south '*Dakshinayana Vasal*'. The Utharayana Vasal will be opened on the *Makara Sankaranthi*' day and will be kept open till the first of Adi (14th January to 15th July) during which the Dakshinayana Vasal will be closed and similarly the Dakshinayana Vasal will be opened on the first of Adi month every year and kept open till the Makara Sankaranthi day (15th July to 14th January) when the Utharayana Vasal will be kept closed. The temple is surrounded by massive walls. The front tall gopuram is considered to be one of the tallest towers in the south. It is noted for its architectural work.

It is said that due to the untiring efforts of a staunch Vaishnavite blind devotee by name Lakshminarayanaswamy who got his power of vision miraculously by the grace of the Lord, the temple has grown up to its present size. It is believed that he remained in the temple day and night and devoted all his time and energy in looking after its affairs. He collected large donations from kings and others and constructed many gopurams and mandapams.

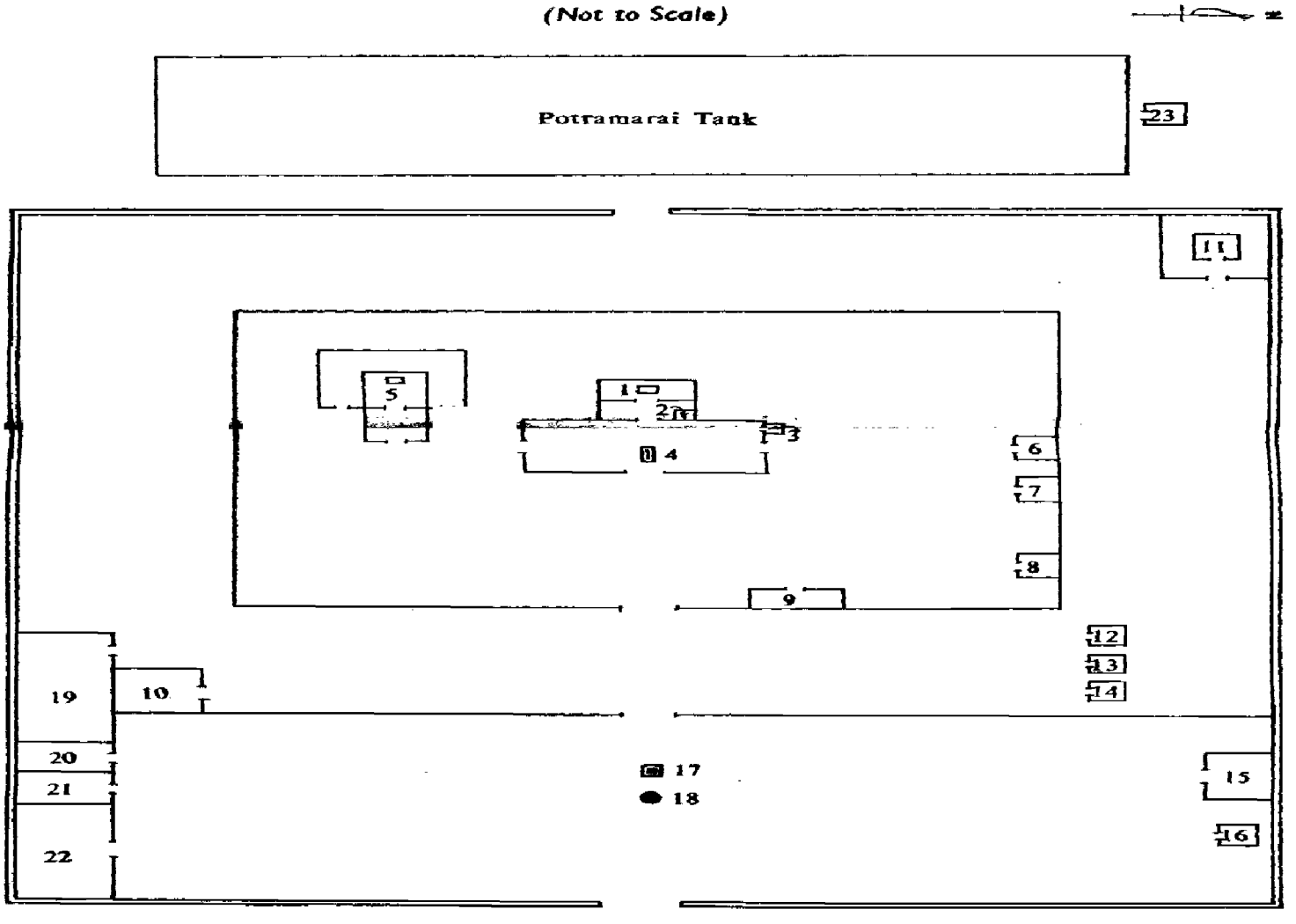
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

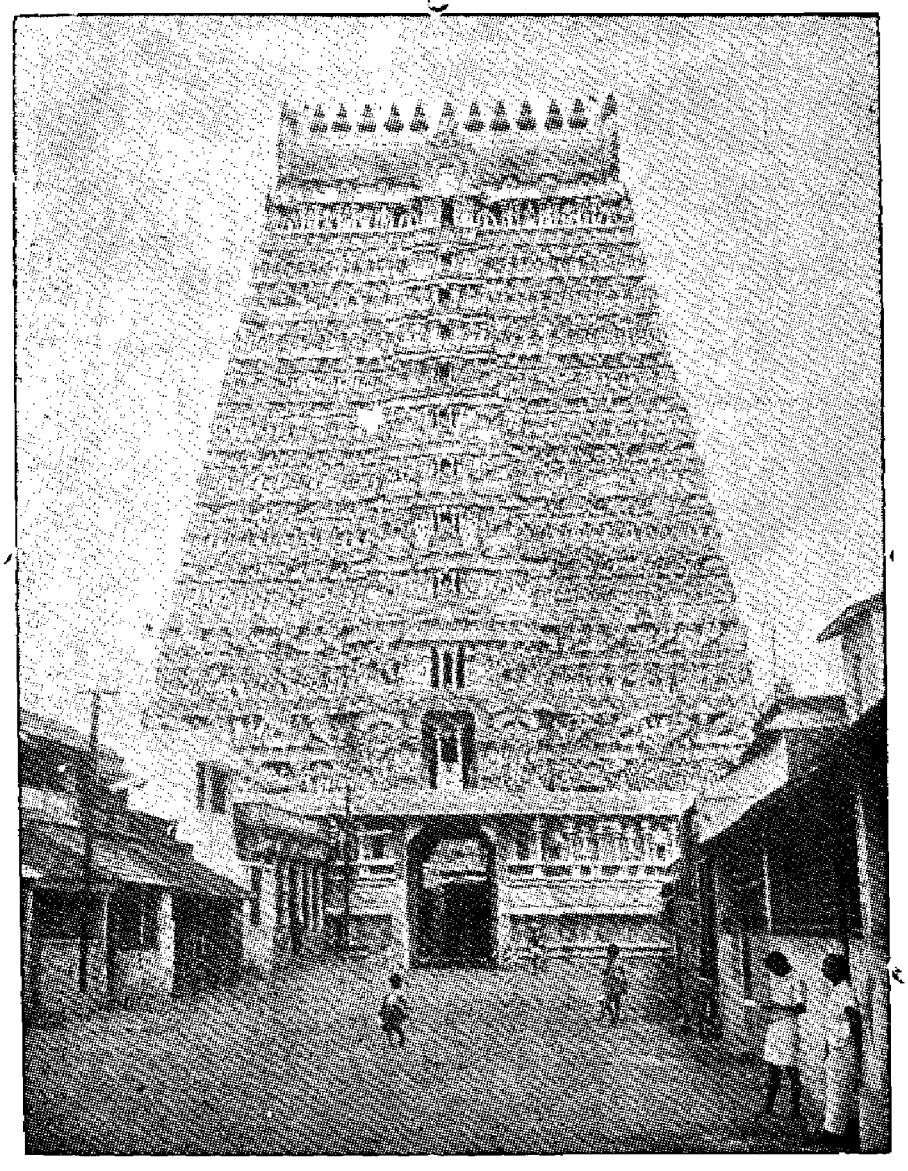
1. Aravamudan, Sri Devi & Bhudevi
2. Karuvoolam
3. Ramar
4. Garudan
5. Komalavalli Thayar
6. Pathala Srinivasar
7. Senaimudaliyar
8. Mettusrinivasar, Sri Devi & Bhudevi
9. Palliarai
10. Vahana Godown
11. Andal
12. Gopalar
13. Ramar, Sita & Lakshmanar
14. Krishnar
15. Hundred Pillared Mandapam
16. Vasantha Mandapam
17. Dwajasthambam
18. Balipeedam
19. Madapalli
20. Desikar
21. Azhwars
22. Devasthanam Office
23. Ema Rishi's Shrine

SRI SARANGAPANISWAMY TEMPLE

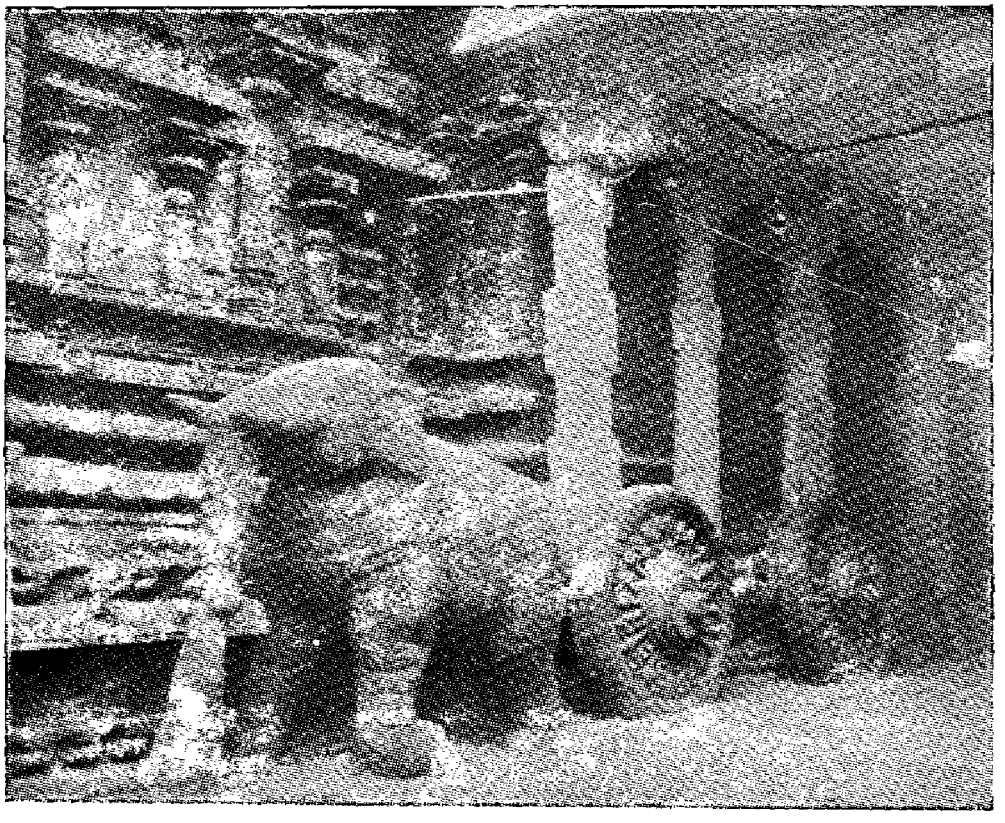
KUMBAKONAM

(Not to Scale)

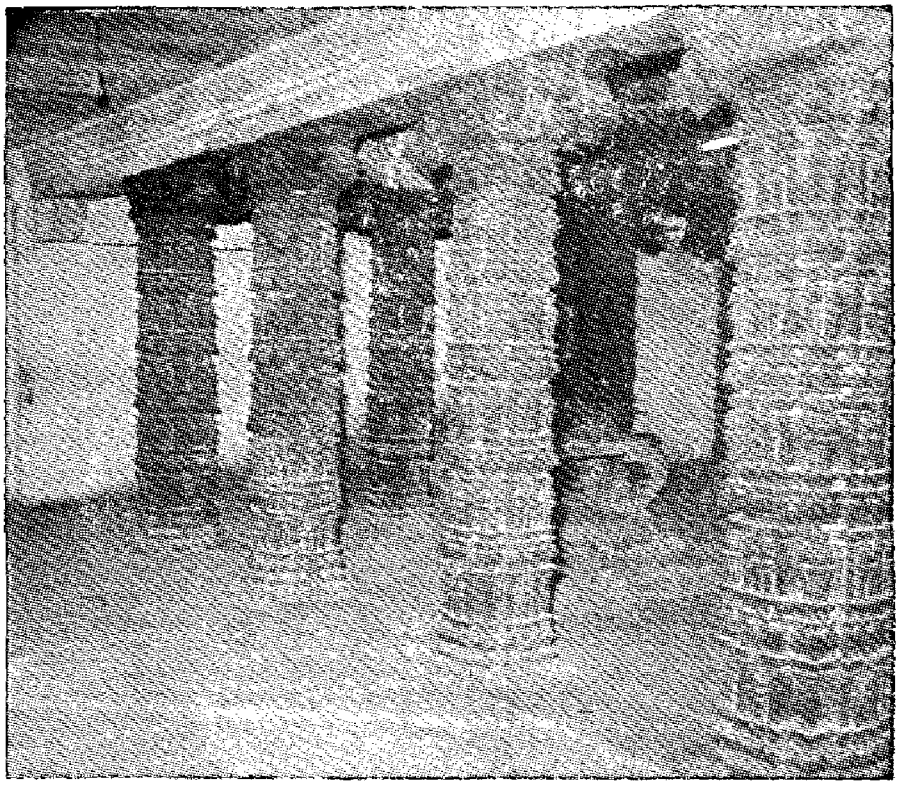




Sri Sarangapaniswamy Temple Eastern Gopuram
Kumbakonam.



Chariot like Mandapam
Sri Sarangapaniswamy Temple
Kumbakonam.



Stone pillars
Sri Sarangapaniswamy Temple
Kumbakonam.

Renovations were made to this shrine about five years ago at a cost of about two lakhs of rupees and the *Maha Samprokshanam* was performed on a grand scale.

There are separate shrines for Aravamudhar and Komalavalli Thayar. In the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Aravamudhar, the presiding deity is seen in the posture of briskly rising up from His bed of *Adhi Sesha* for giving darshan to Saint Thirumazhisai Alwar. His consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi could be seen by his side. This semi-reclining or rising pose of the Lord is believed to be in response to the prayers of Sri Thirumazhisai Alwar and hence the Lord also assumed the name of Aravumudha Alwar and conferred the title of '*Piran*' to Thirumazhisai Alwar who was therefore known as Thirumazhisai Piran.

The uthsava vigraham of Sri Sarangapaniswamy with His Ubhaya Nachiyars are very beautiful. The festival idols of Sri Komalavalli Thayar, Sri Aravamudhar and His Ubhaya Nachiars are also equally enchanting. These festival idols are decorated beautifully and taken out in a procession on the nineteenth day of the *Athyayana* Uthsavam in the month of Margazhi (December-January). Besides the two shrines of Sri Aravamudhar and Komalavalli Thayar, there are also separate shrines here for the Alwars and Sri Vedhantha Maha Desigar which shows that this is a *vadagalai* Vaishnavite temple. Seven reputed Alwars, Viz., Bhoodhath Alwar, Poigai Alwar, Pey Alwar Thirumazhisai Alwar, Nammalwar, Pery Alwar, Andal and Thirumangai Alwar had visited this shrine and composed several sacred verses extolling the presiding deity. Another noteworthy feature of this place is that "*Divya Prabandham*" (4,000 verses in Tamil) sung by the Alwars and considered to be *Vedha* in Tamil language was brought to light and inaugurated at the behest of Sri Aravamudhar by the great *Acharya Sri Nathamunigal*. This adds additional importance to the sanctity of this shrine.

Poojas are performed six times a day here. Even though the Lord of the temple is considered to belong to Vadagalai sect,

twelve families of hereditary *Thengalai Battachariars* have the right of performing poojas by turn. Only married men of these families after due initiation according to Pancharathra Agamas are eligible to perform poojas. The temple owns antique jewellery made of gold, silver and diamonds valued at Rs. 3,46,000 of which the stone-studded crown (Head-gear) and the gold kavachas of the Lord with precious stones are notable. The temple runs a *Prabandha Padasala* as a charitable institution. It owns about 356·60 acres of wet and 140·11 acres of dry lands apart from thirty-three buildings and two houses which fetch an aunual income of about Rs. 83,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. It also gets an additional income of about Rs. 1,000 per annum from its hundi collections.

The temple owns a silver ratham and two big cars with exquisite images carved in wood. It is said that the larger of the two is the third biggest in the district. The silver ratham is used to take out the Lord in procession on important occasions like the first day of Thai (January-February), Vasantha Uthsavam etc. There are also several ancient vahanas made of wood, of which a few are silver plated. Just as in Srirangam, here also festivals are celebrated almsot every month throughout the year. Brahmothsavam in Thai and Chithirai, Vasanthothsavam in Vaikasi (May-June), Pavithrothsavam in Ani (June-July), Navarathri, Masi Maham, Panguni Uthiram, Theppothsavam in Masi (February-March) and Oonjal festival in Margazhi (December-January) are the major festivals of this shrine, of which the Bramothsavam in Chithirai and Thai are the most important ones. These attract thousands of devotees from the neighbouring villages and towns.

The legend connected with the origin of this shrine is as follows:

Maharishi Saunaka and others assembled once on the bank of the river Saraswathy to perform a sacrifice. They wanted to know as to who was the greatest of the three Gods-Brahma,

Vishnu and Siva, so that they could invoke Him to the sacrificial fire. To settle this, they requested Sage Brigu to meet the three Lords separately and pronounce a judgement. Sage Brigu met Brahma, Vishnu and Siva individually and pronounced Vishnu to be the greatest because in spite of his giving a kick to Vishnu, He did not lose His temper, but in turn showed every respect to him and washed his feet. Brigu repented much for his action and wanted to serve Lord Vishnu in two births. During his first re-birth he was known as Guha, the boatman who was Sri Rama's friend and in his next birth he was known as Sage Hema. He did penance and Vishnu gave him darshan and granted the following three boons : (1) Goddess Lakshmi (Vishnu's consort) should be born as his daughter; (2) Vishnu should become his son-in-law; and (3) he should get liberation in physical form. The Lord also directed him to find Lakshmi on a thousand petalled lotus where She would be praying for reunion with Him after Her departure in anger when the sage dealt a kick to Him in Her presence.

As directed by the Lord, Hema Rishi who was doing penance on the northern bank of the Pottramarai Tank to the west of the temple one day found, Goddess Lakshmi in the form of a child floating on a thousand petalled golden lotus. The sage with great joy took the child to his hermitage and brought her up as his own daughter. As the Goddess was found in the midst of lotus petals, She came to be known as Komalavalli. The child grew to marriageable age and in response to his tapas, Lord Vishnu in the form of Sri Sarangapani came down here from *Vaikuntam* in a golden chariot to marry the Goddess. Hema Rishi who had been bringing up the child all along gave Her in marriage to Lord Aravamudhar. Thus the Lord settled down here in this shrine with His chariot as is evident from the chariot forming part of the temple constructed.

Hema Pushkarani which has probably been named after the sage Hema Rishi is the most sacred of all the Theerthams here and measures 361 feet by 285 feet. A grand floating festival is being conducted in this tank every year in the

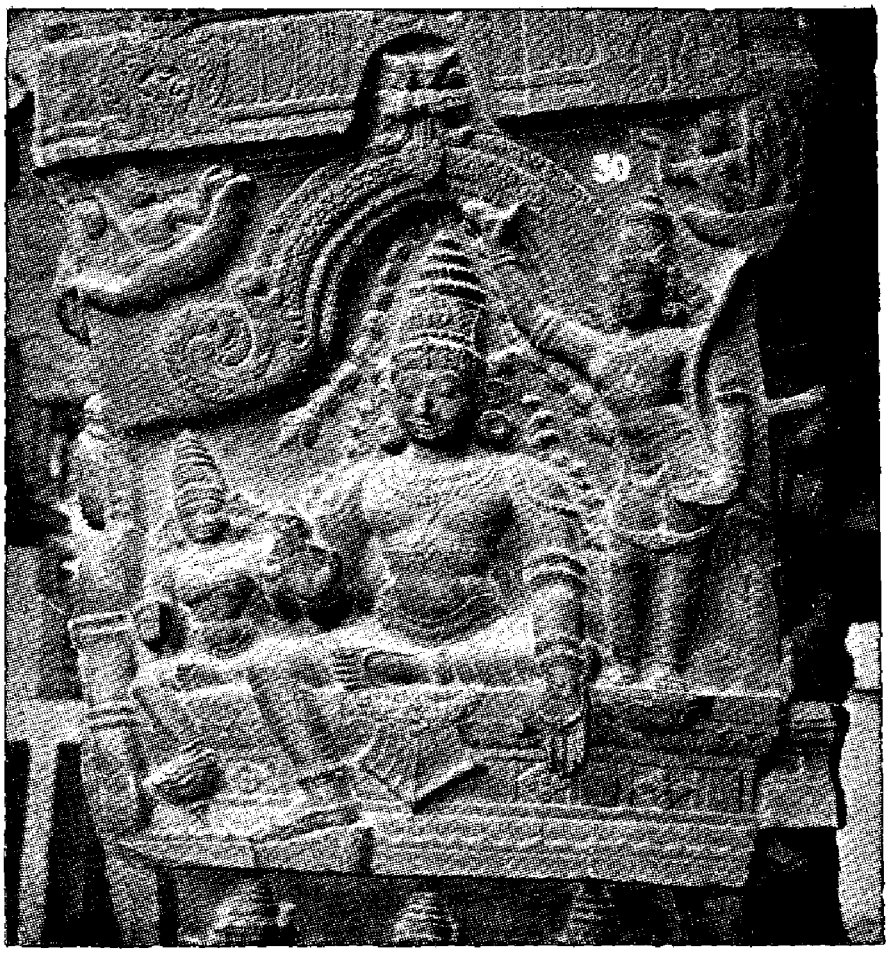
month of Masi (February-March). The tank is also known as Lakshmi Theertham and Amudhavani, i.e., the tank whose sacred waters have been sanctified by drops of nectar at the time of the deluge. It is customary here for devotees to offer worship at the shrine of Hema Rishi first before taking bath in the sacred Hema Pushkarani.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

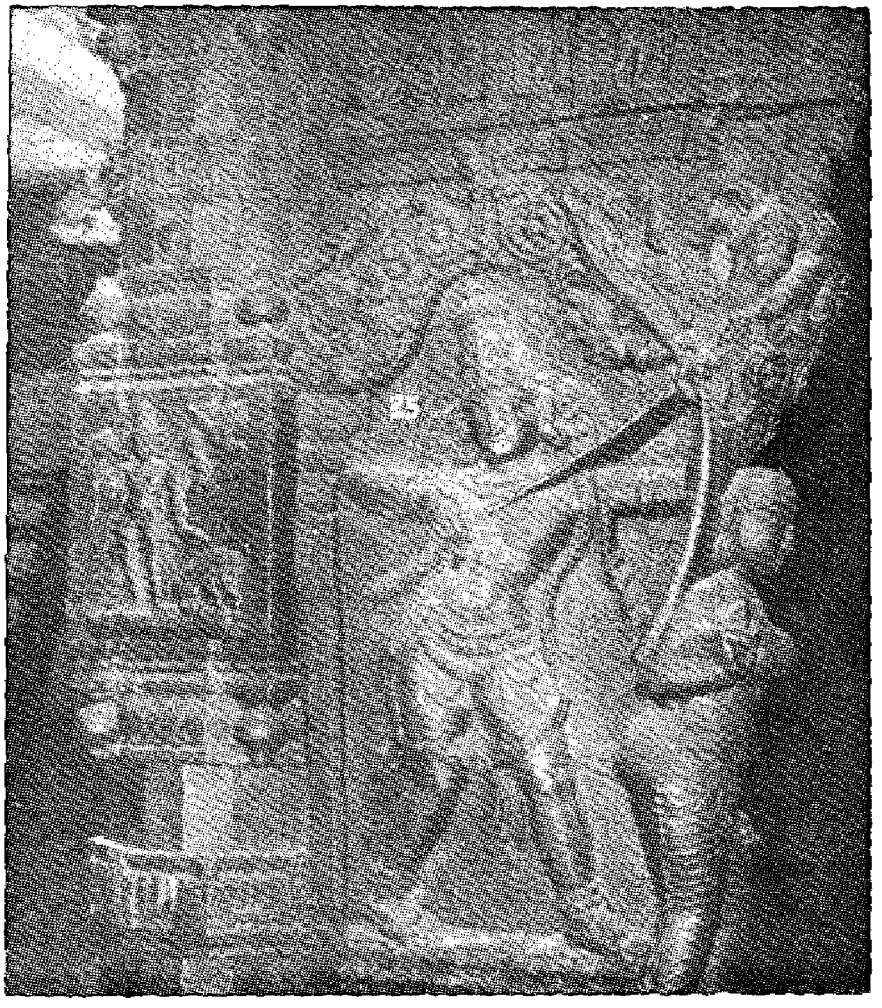
3. Sri Ramaswamy Temple

Close to the Adhi Kumbeswaraswamy Temple is this old shrine of Sri Rama in the heart of Kumbakonam Town. Said to have been built by the Nayak King, Raghunatha (1600-1630) with the help of his able Minister Govinda Dikshitha, it looks like on art gallery. The beautiful sculptures relating to the Dasavathara in the front mandapam and the frescoes on the walls in the prakaram depicting scenes from the Ramayana are seen with great interest by a large number of devotees who came here.

From epigraphical evidence it is clear that Raghunatha Nayak's supremacy extended not only over Tanjore District, but also over the neighbouring districts. Despite the political turmoil of his time, Raghunatha evinced keen interest in religion and literature. It is said that the beautiful images of Sri Rama and Sita were found when a tank was being dug near Darasuram, west of Kumbakonam at the behest of Raghunatha. The king immediately ordered that the temple of Sri Rama be erected at Kumbakonam, Rameswarem and Srirangam. This is the origin of the present temple at Kumbakonam. According to another version, the Lord appeared before the king in his dream and directed him to dig out His image in the Sri Ramar Tank near Darasuram. To signify this incident, the festival idol is brought before the statue of Ragunatha Nayaka in the temple before the performance of Abishegam.



Vibheeshana Pattabishegam
Sri Ramaswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.



Manmatha with bow and arrow
Sri Ramaswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.

A beautiful Maiden
Sri Ramaswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.

A beautiful carving on a pillar
Sri Ramaswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.

Facing north and situated on a two-acre land on the southern side of the Bazaar street, Sri Ramaswamy Temple has a majestic five tier Rajagopuram. As soon as one enters the shrine, one comes across a spacious mandapam whose sixty-two pillars are works of art. Each one of these bespeaks the high water mark of art during the Nayak times. Crossing another mandapam one can reach the inner prakaram whose walls are adorned with the frescoes representing the Ramayana scenes.

In the sanctum sanctorum, one can worship both the Moolavar and Uthsavar. The image of Sri Rama and Sita with Bharathar, Lakshmanar, Sathrugnar and Hanumar depicting Sri Rama's *Pattabishegam* or coronation are very inspiring. A characteristic feature of this shrine is that both Sri Rama and Sita are seated on the same peetam and Sri Hanuman is depicted as singing "*Ram, Ram*" with the help of the musical instrument Veena. Ardent devotees are deeply moved by these artistic vigrahams. The festival idols are also very impressive. In front of the Maha Mandapam one can worship Srinivasa Perumal with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi.

The temple which abounds in beautiful sculptures is also noted for its festivals round the year. Of all the festivals, Sri Rama Navami in the Tamil month of Panguni (March-April) is celebrated on a grand scale for ten days. The car festival on the tenth day is attended by thousands of devotees of Sri Rama. The shrines owns costly jewels and valuable vahanas or mounts. The temple was completely renovated in 1934 and a Kumbabishegam was performed.

Poojas are performed five times daily. The temple owns now about fourteen acres of land. An Executive Officer and a Board of Honorary Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department manage the shrine.

4. Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple

Among the many temples built and renovated by the Cholas in Thanjavur region, Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple in Kumbakonam is said to be the master creation of early

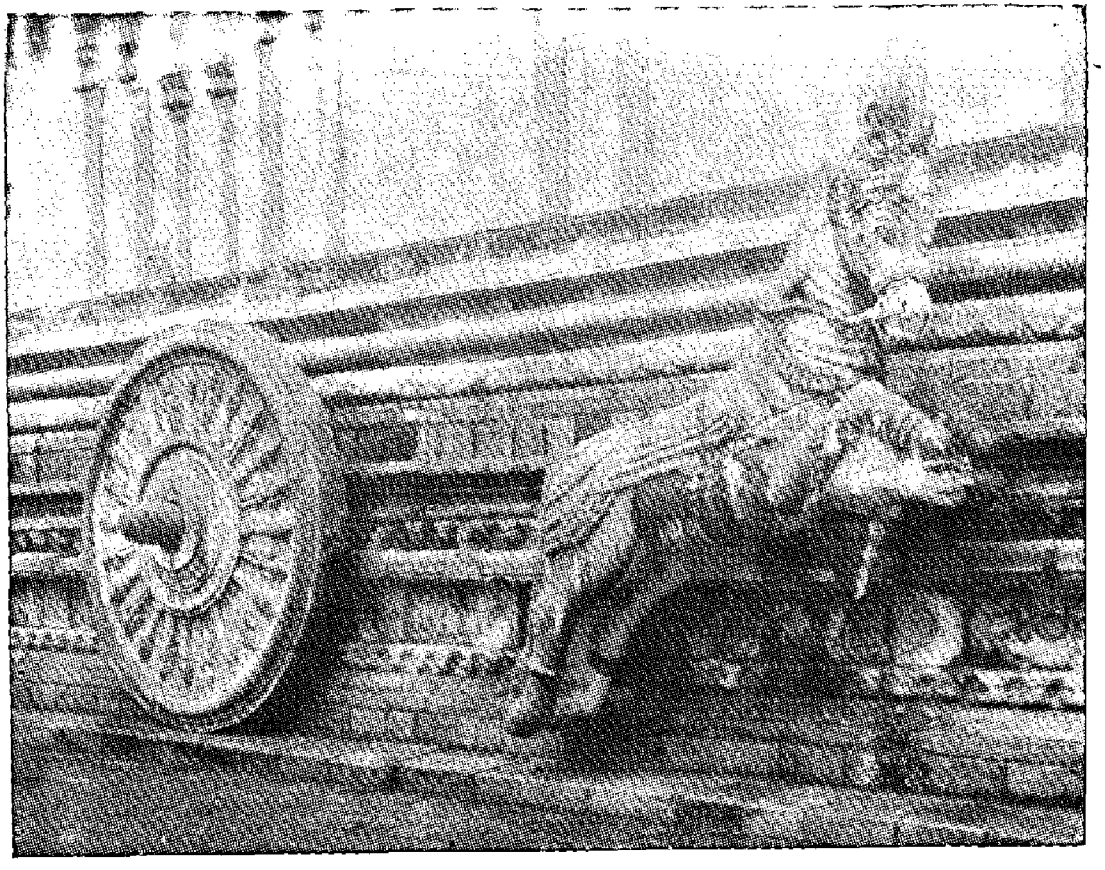
Chola art. With its beautiful sculptures it is one of the main attractions of tourists and pilgrims to the town. The gopuram, vimanams, mandapams and the idols reveal exquisite workmanship.

Some scholars are inclined to date the Nageswara Temple to the period of Aditya Chola (Tenth Century A.D.). The presiding deity Sri Nageswarar is also known as Vilvavanesar and Pathala Beejanathar. The God is referred to by several other names in the inscriptions (e.g.,) "Thiru Kizhakottathu Pattaragar", "Paramaswamy", "Kizhakottam Udaiyar". etc. The shrine of the Lord faces east. The Goddess of this temple is known as "Periya Nayagi" and "Sri Brahma Nayagi". The Goddess's sanctum faces south.

There are five poojas daily in the temple. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated during the "Panguni" month. In the month of "Thai", the Panchamoorthies have holy immersion in the Cauvery. According to the temple authorities the Brahmothsavam which was suspended for about eighteen years was resumed in 1961. One can also worship in the temple Vinayagar, Kali, Padaivettu Mariamman, Pralayakala Rudrar, Subramaniar with Valli and Deivayanai, Durgai, Suryan and Natarajar.

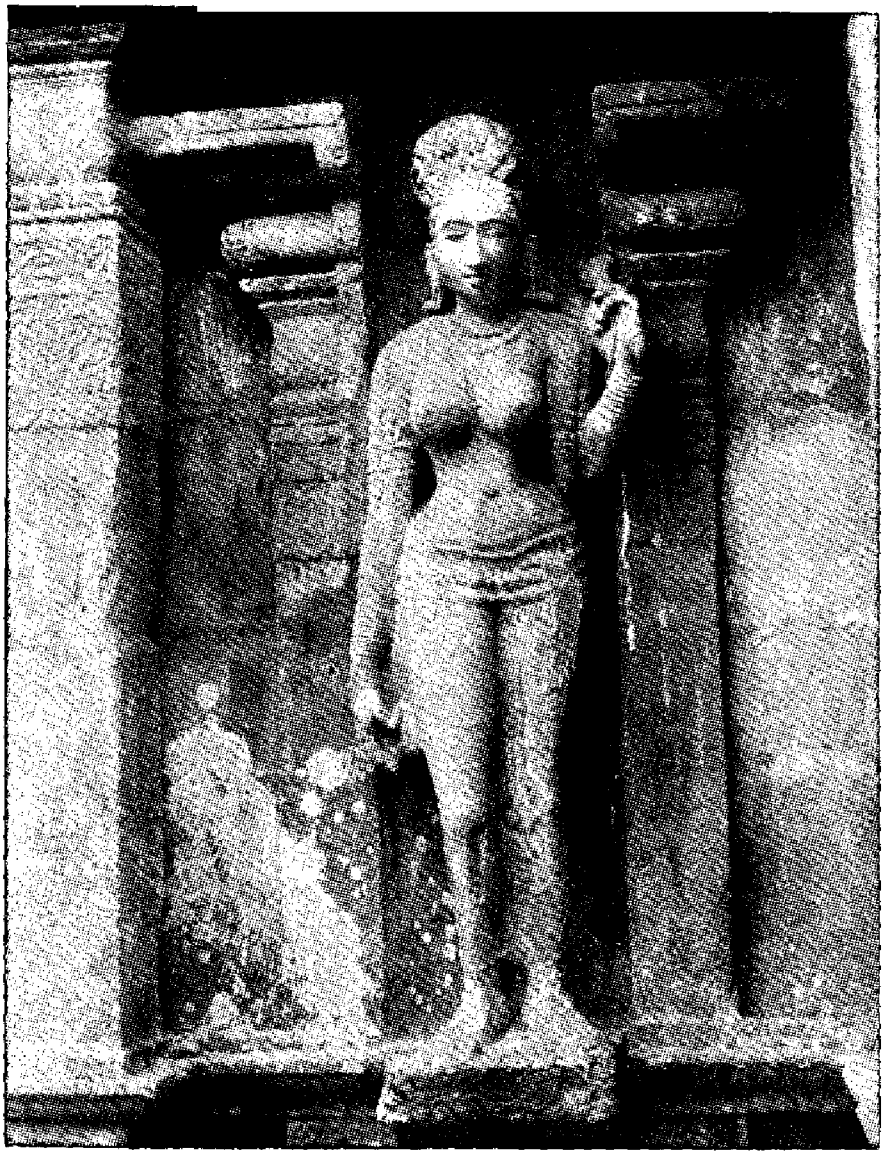
This temple owns 52 acres and 30 cents of wet and dry lands as well as a number of houses and vacant sites. Through this the temple is getting about Rs. 19,000 annually. The temple is also getting about Rs. 200 by way of hundi collection and Rs. 1,000 as Government grant. The jewels are worth about Rs. 13,000.

One of the most ancient of the temples at Kumbakonam is that of Nageswarar and its beginnings are shrouded in mystery. Like all major South Indian temples, the Nageswarar has its own luxuriant mythological and traditional accounts of its origin and associations. According to legends, Nagaraja (the King of serpents) and Surya worshipped the presiding deity of this temple to attain their ends. It is said that the thousand headed Adhisesha was groaning under the weight of the world which became unbearable and so he offered



The chariot-shaped shrine of Lord Natarajar
Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple
Kumbakonam.

Lord Vinayagar
Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.



A beautiful Maiden
Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple,
Kumbakonam.

prayers to Lord Siva for being favoured with sufficient strength to bear the weight. Pleased with his prayers Lord Siva granted his request and asked him to proceed to Kumbakonam in Chola Mandalam and worship the Lord in Kuvinvanesam (the present Nageswara Temple) and take bath in the sacred water at the place. Adhisesha went to Kumbakonam and worshipped the Lord in the said temple for a long time at the end of which Siva with Parvathi appeared before him and blessed him. It is said that the presiding deity of the temple is called Nageswarar since he was worshipped by Nagaraju. A well in the temple where Nagaraja is believed to have taken his bath is called Naga Theertham.

The reason for the special association of Surya with the deity in the temple is also contained in the legends. It is said that Samnja, the daughter of Visvakarma and the wife of Surya was unable to bear the resplendency of the Sun God and hence left for her father's house. Surya followed her to his father-in-law's house but he was deprived of his rays by Tvasta as a result of which he lost his splendour. A heavenly voice informed Surya that he would regain his original splendour if he worshipped Nageswara at Kumbakonam. This was faithfully done by the devotee. Siva appeared before him and restored to him his brilliance. It is on this account that this place itself is known as Surya Kshetra or Bhaskara Kshetra and the tank in the temple in which he is said to have bathed as Surya Theertham. To mark the close association of Surya with the God in the temple, there is a separate shrine for him in its inner circuit. It is believed that the temple is aligned and oriented in such a way that the rays of the sun are seen to fall on the Lingam in the central shrine through the opening in the eastern tower of the temple for three days in the year (11th, 12th and 13th in the Tamil month Chithirai (April). This is considered to be an act of adoration of the God by Surya.

Another legend regarding this temple relates to the story of a saint named Bhagavar. It is said that on the expiry and cremation of his mother at Vedaranyam the saint took her bones in a pot to Varanasi for immersion

in the waters of the holy Ganges. A boy accompanied him throughout and after visiting several places of religious importance they came to Kumbakonam. The boy who was not till then aware of the contents of the pot opened it at the place and found fragrant lotus flowers in it. On reaching Varanasi, Bhagavar opened the pot and the boy was surprised to find bones in it. He told Bhagavar of what he found in it at Kumbakonam. Bhagavar understood the sanctity of Kumbakonam and brought back the pot with the bones to that place. As expected, the bones turned out to be lotus flowers again. He immersed them in the waters of the Cauvery running by the side of Kumbakonam, remained in the Nageswara Temple and worshipped for several years the deity Madandai Pagan in it. There is a separate shrine for the saint in the inner circuit of the temple. A bathing ghat in the river Cauvery at the place containing a flight of steps is named after the saint and is called *Bhagavat Padithurai*.

The presiding deity of the Nageswara Temple is sung by Saint Thirunavukkarasar in the hymns of the Thevaram. He refers to the deity as the Dancing Lord of Kudandaikilkottam (Kudandai-kilkotta-then-kuthanar). The hymns exhibit just as every hymn in the Thevaram collection does a mystic fervour combined with lyric beauty.

The Nageswarar at Kumbakonam is one of the earliest extant Chola temples and its architectural features and plastic embellishments, endow it with a unique art of historical interest, not shared by many in South India of almost the same period. Noted alike for its retention of early elements and anticipation of later features, the Nageswara may be said to mark a stage in the evolution of South Indian Temple architecture. The heavy indentations in the plan of the temple with the resultant light and shade effect on the elevation, greater number of niches in its walls, sculptural decoration in the second tier in its super-structure and the frontal projection of its vimanam indicate an attempt to experiment with or import fresh forms while the sculptures, particularly the portraits reveal a happy predilection for bold reliefs untram-

melled by the conventions of pose and produce a markedly ethereal effect. Both in architectural and scuptural wealth the Nageswarar Temple is richer than many contemporary shrines and occupies a unique place among the early Chola temples.

The *Nirtha Sabha* or the dancing hall like the Sopana, Davana and Kalyanamandapam is a feature of large and later temples unknown to the smaller shrines of the early Chola period. The Nirtha Sabha in the Nageswarar Temple is assignable to the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries having all the stylistic characteristics of later Chola architecture. It faces south and consists of a high mandapam with a flight of steps, guarded by balustrades. On either side of the balustrades is an imposing and heavily plastered elephant in stone which appears to be a later addition. Behind the elephants on either side is a stone horse galloping and richly caparisoned. Though these carvings of horses clearly betray the artist's tendency to idealise, they claim one's homage by their exuberant workmanship and decorative detail. Beyond the horses is a stone wheel, beautified with circles of lotus petals and hamsas in the centre and with twelve spokes and a relief of Surya in between two spokes and the outer rim. The wheels, the galloping horses and the elephants endow the Nirtha Sabha with the appearance of a stone ratha. Such ratha like mandapams are seen in some smaller temples as the one at Thirukkarugavur and many larger temples like those at Palaiyarai, Darasuram, Vriddhachalam, Taramangalam etc.

Of the three gopurams raising over the entrance in the east, south and west walls of the outer circuit the later two are modern and are devoid of any importance while the first command attention by its architectural features and decoration marking a stage in the evolutions of South Indian temple towers.

The Nageswaraswamy Temple is comparatively rich in epigraphical material consisting of forty-two inscriptions. Of them, one is a Pandya inscription of Maravarman Varaguna II (Accen. A.D. 862), forty are of the early and later Chola periods and one of the Vijayanagar period.

5. Sri Chakrapaniswamy Temple

A little outside the concentration of the famous temples of Lord Kumbeswara, Sarangapani, Nageswarar and Ramaswami in Kumbakonam, is situated in a quiet comparatively smaller shrine dedicated to Lord Chakrapani. Trekking along the crowded bazaar of the town to reach the temple, one could see the vestiges of old Kumbakonam in the temple area. This temple is one of the 108 shrines sacred to Vaishnavites.

Sri Chakrapaniswamy Temple which is close to the Cauvery faces east. The sanctum sanctorum is on a higher level. To the north of it is the sanctum of Sri Vijayavalli Thayar. The mandapams of the temple are of beautiful workmanship. The other deities that one can worship in the temple are Sri Ramar, Anjaneyar, The Alwars and Garuda.

The inspiring images of Sri Chakrapani or Chakkararajan with eight arms and Sri Sudarsanavalli Thayar with a gracious visage are in the sanctum sanctorum. Sri Brahma, Suryan and Agni are depicted as praying the Perumal and Thayar. A characteristic feature of the presiding deity is that He has, like Lord Siva, a third eye on His forehead. Great saints like Thirumazhisai Alwar have sung in praise of this deity. This old temple was renovated and a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1956. The flooring of the prakarams was laid in 1960, thanks to the munificence of a north Indian devotee, Sri Mugniram Ramkumar Bangur Didwana (Marwar). It will be interesting to note that the level of Thayar Sannadhi was raised and the Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam were constructed by his father in 1933.

This sacred temple is otherwise known as "Devaloga Pattanam", "Kalyana Puram", "Siva Vishnupuram", "Sarangarajan Pattanam" and "Olimayamana Pattanam". It was called "Kalyanapuram" because of the belief that the marriage of Lakshmi with Sri Narayanan is said to have been celebrated here.

It is said that Saraboji, the king of Tanjore was cured of a disease due to the grace of Lord Chakrapani. A

bronze statue of the king has been installed in the temple facing the Lord. There is an Anjaneyar image with Pancha Mugha or five faces in the Swami's Prakaram.

The pillars of the mandapams of the temple are artistic. The area occupied by the temple is about 25,000 sq. ft. There is one Raja Gopuram, two Garbha Grahams and three prakarams. There are six poojas daily in the temple. There are jewels worth about Rs. 58,000. There is one damaged "*Jwala Kreedam*" made of costly red stones. There are a number of vahanas in the temple. The temple owns only 1·45 acres of wet land besides twenty-four shops and twelve sites. Brahmothsavam is celebrated during Masi month. There are other festivals as well throughout the year. The Executive Officer and the Trustees are managing the temple.

6. Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy Temple

One of the old shrines of Kumbakonam, Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy Temple is situated on the northern bank of the Mahamaham Tank. This temple faces west and the western entrance is crowned by a seventy-two feet gopuram. The presiding deity is Kasi Viswanathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar has sung in praise of the presiding deity.

There are two prakarams in the temple of Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy. Crossing the flag mast as one enters the temple, one finds the sanctum of the nine river Goddesses facing south. The Moolavar is a Lingam of about 2' 4" in height. The divine consort Sri Visalakshi Amman is facing south. The inspiring stone icons of the river Goddesses are in standing posture, each measuring about five feet. The nine Goddesses, especially Cauvery is worshipped by those desirous of marriage or progeny. Many votive offerings are made to these Goddesses. One can also worship in the temple of Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Gajalakshmi, Navagrahas and Dakshinamurthi. Kshethra Mahalingam, a seven feet Lingam under the Sthala Viruksham, Margosa Tree is situated in the outer prakaram on the western side. An important feature of the

temple is that at the time of Bramothsavam in Adhi Kumbeswar Temple (Masi Month) sand is taken from the foot of Kshethra Mahalingam for the preliminary function.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns 16 acres 80 cents of lands. There are two palanquins and twelve vahanas here, all made of wood. Adi Pooram, Navarathri, Karthigai Deepam, Thiruvadhirai and Masi Magham are the festivals celebrated in the temple. The important of these is Masi Magham. A single Trustee looks after the temple administration.

Like most of the temples in the region, this shrine also has a legendary background. Once the nine river Goddesses viz., Ganga, Yamuna, Narmadha, Saraswathi, Godavari, Cauvery, Tungabadhra, Krishna and Sarayu represented to Lord Siva that millions and millions of people washed off their sins in their waters and consequently they (the rivers) were overloaded by the enormous sins. The river Goddesses, therefore, requested the Lord to absolve them of all sins. The Lord took his abode at Benares (Kasi) with the name of Viswanatha and the nine Goddesses worshipped Him later. He guided them to Kumbakonam where they bathed in the Mahamaham Tank on the Mahamaham day and worshipped Sri Adhi Kumbeswarar and got rid of their sins. Sri Viswanathar later settled down at the site of the present temple and the nine Goddesses entered the body of the Lord. Hence the place is also called "*Kayaronam* or *Karonam.*".

According to another legend, Sri Rama was asked to worship Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy by sage Agasthya. Sri Rama worshipped the Lord and entered the Lord's body to get "*Rudramsam*" with a view to kill the demon king Ravana and then take back Sita. The name "Kayaronam" for the place is attributed by some people to this legendary incident.

7. Sri Somanathaswamy Alias Banapureeswarar Temple

Kumbakonam has a number of legends and traditions about its origin. The place from where Siva is believed

to have wielded the arrow (Bana) to hit the pot full of Nectar or Amirtha came to be known as Banapuresam. The Swayambu Lingam, the presiding deity of the temple that rose here got the name Banapureeswarar. Sri Somanathaswamy alias Banapureeswarar Temple is about 1·5 kilometres from Kumbakonam railway station. The place is known popularly as Banathurai.

The temple which faces east has a small gopuram over its entrance. The divine consort is known as Sri Somakalambigai. Her shrine faces south. The plinth area of this temple is about 16,000 sq. ft. The shrines of Swami and Ambal are crowned by two vimanams. There is a single prakaram. Sri Narthana Vinayagar, Dakshinamurthy, Arthanareeswarar and Durgai are installed on the outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum. There are separate shrines for Durgai and Chandikeswarar. An idol of Siva with three legs called Jwarahareswarar has been installed in the temple facing west. The idol is said to depict the three functions of Thirumurthis, viz. *Srishti* (creation), *Sthithi* (Protection) and *Samharam* (destruction). Devotees suffering from fever get relieved if they worship this deity. Kumbabishegam was performed in this temple in 1963.

There are some stone inscriptions on the walls around the sanctum sanctorum. There are three poojas daily by a hereditary Gurukkal. The temple owns three buildings, wet lands of about 16·89 acres and some vacant plots.

The important festivals of this temple are Thiruvadhirai, Skandha Sashti, Vijaya Dhasami and Karthigai Deepam. The temple is now managed by an Executive Officer and three Trustees.

8. Sri Someswaraswamy Temple

Adjacent to Sarangapaniswamy Temple is the small Siva Temple of Sri Someswaraswamy facing east. It is situated on an area of about two acres. It is said to be an ancient one though its period of origin is not known precisely. The

renovation of the temple took place twelve years ago and for this, money was raised from public donations.

The presiding deity here is Lord Someswarar, a Swayambu Lingam and His consort is known as Somasundari. The Lord is also called Sikhesar. The Amman's shrine faces south. Saint Sambandhar had sung in praise of the presiding deity. Sri Arunagirinathar had sung in praise of Subramaniar in this temple. Images of four Saivite Saints have been installed in the temple. Thirugnanasambandhar's image has been installed separately, facing the Lord. There are Uthsava-moorthis of Sri Somaskandhar, Sri Chandrasekharar, Sri Natarajar and Sri Sivakami, Sri Adipoora Amman, Sri Subramaniar with consorts Valli and Deivayanai and Sri Vinayagr.

Regular poojas five times a day are being conducted here.

The jewels of the temple are old modelled and are valued at Rs. 1,550. The temple gets an income of Rs. 1,600 from its lands (five acres) and shops leased out and this amount is utilised for the general maintenance and day-to-day activities of the temple.

The temple has a big tower at the entrance, a smaller inner Gopuram, two Vimanams and two sancta. There is a single prakaram in which Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Mahalakshmi, Soleeswarar (Lingam), Chandikeswarar, Malleswarar and Mangalanayaki have sannadhis. The vahanas owned by the temple consist of Rishabam, Seshan, Peacock, Bandicoot Horse, Indra Vimanam, Kailasa Parvatham and two palanquins.

The festivals celebrated in this temple are Vijaya Dhasami, Skandha Sashti, Masi Magham, Karthigai Deepam, Tiruvadhirai, Avani Moolam and Adi Pooram. The administration of the temple vests with a Board of Trustees with three members.

9. Sri Gouthameswaraswamy Temple

In the south-western corner of the Mahamaham Tank of Kumbakonam is situated the hoary Saivite shrine, dedicated to Sri Gouthameswaraswamy.

This temple occupies an area of about fifty cents. There are two sancta, two vimanams and a prakaram. The temple was renovated at the time of Mahamaham in 1956.

The divine consort is known as Sri Soundaranayaki. Poojas are performed four times daily by a hereditary Gurukkal. The temple has some landed property and annual income. Masi Magham, Navarathri and Thiruvadhirai are the important annual festivals in the temple. A single Trustee looks after temple management.

The temple has an interesting legendary background. It is said that sage Gouthamar who wanted to get absolved of his sins visited various sacred places and finally reached Kumbakonam on the advice of Sage Durvasar to worship Sri Upaveetheswarar near Mahamaham Tank. Sage Gouthamar regularly worshipped the Lord with deep veneration. Pleased with the Sage's devotion, the Lord appeared before him and blessed him.

With tears of joy the Sage addressed the God thus :

அடியனேன் முனகராய அந்தண ரோடுங்கூடி
நெடியநா னடைந்ததீங்கு முழுமையும் நீங்கவேண்டும்
கொடியமற்றவ ரெஞ்ஞான்றுங் கொடுந்துய ரடையவேண்டும்
படியவா மினையதீர்த்த மென்பெயர் பற்றல்வேண்டும்

நீயுமென் பெயர்பூண்டிந்த விலிங்கத்தே நிலவவேண்டும்
பாயுமால் விடையாய்நிற்காம் பணிபலவு ஞற்றுவோர்கள்
ஆயும்வான் றிருவூராயுன் னடிநிழலமர்தல் வேண்டும்
தோயுமிவ் வரங்க ளெல்லாம் சுரந்தருள்.

It is said that the Lord took the name of Gouthamesar as desired by the Sage. The waters where the Sage took bath got the name Gouthama Theertham. In the south-western part of the temple's prakaram, one can see the image of Sage Gouthamar. The temple has been visited by the great Saivite saints.

10. Sri Vedanarayana Perumal Temple and Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple.

Sri Vedanarayana Perumal Temple and Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple are the two famous and particularly

sacred Vaishnavite temples of this place run by private efforts. These temples are under the control of the Sourashtra Charitable Endowments Committee, Kumbakonam which is said to have been constituted in the year 1875. This Committee consisting of twenty-three members selected by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is mainly intended to administer the Trust properties of the Sourashtra Community people of the locality.

According to the Sthala Puranam, the antiquity of these temples is evidenced by the fact that a reference has been made about the existence of these temples in the "Vishyothra Puranam" (Brahmanadha Samvadham) and also in the old Palmleaf manuscripts. The following legend is also known from these records which speaks of the origin of the temple.

Once Lord Brahma became proud of his power of creation and was openly saying that Lord Mahavishnu and Rudhra did not possess these powers. With a view to teach Brahma Deva a lesson, Lord Mahavishnu created a demon and directed him against Brahma Deva. On seeing the demon, Brahma surrendered himself to Mahavishnu who pointed out to him his mistake and cursed that He (Brahmadeva) would lose his powers of creation and that he would regain his powers after performing a severe penance in Bhuloga. Accordingly Brahma Deva came to the earth and did a penance at the place Kumbakonam invoking the blessings of Lord Mahavishnu. Brahma Deva also performed an Aswametha Yagam which was attended by all Devas and Saints. During the Yaga, Lord Mahavishnu appeared from the 'Homa' with Goddess Lakshmi and blessed Brahma Deva to regain his power of creation and also taught him the four Vedhas, Sastras and Puranas. The Lord also created a holy water by excavating the earth with the help of His *'Ghadhayudha'* in which all of them took their bath. As a result of this, Lord Mahavishnu is known as 'Vedha Narayana and His consort as 'Vedha-

valli'. The holy water of this place is known as 'Arasalar'. On the request of Brahma Deva, Lord Mahavishnu established Himself in this place as 'Vedhanarayana' and has been giving darshan to the worshippers even now. Lord Brahma Deva also established Himself in the same place and the temple itself is now known as 'Brahman Koil'.

The Varadaraja Perumal Temple which is situated to the north of Brahman Temple is also equally important. Adjacent to this temple there was a big tank and it is said that Lord Varadaraja Perumal had established Himself in the Mandapam near this tank and hence He was known as 'Mandapa Swamy'. It is believed that one who worships Lord Varadaraja Perumal will get all his prayers fulfilled.

The important festival of these temples is 'Mahamaha Brahmothsavam' in February every year. It is celebrated for ten days consecutively during which the festival icons are taken in procession on the various vahanas.

SWAMIMALAI

11. Sri Swaminathaswamy Temple

Swamimalai, a sacred place glorified in Nakkirar's "*Thiru Murugatru Padai*" as one of the "*Aarupadai Veedu*" is a renowned place of pilgrimage in South India. Situated on the bank of the sacred Cauvery, Swamimalai is a small compact village, eight kilometres west of Kumbakonam. It is well connected with the neighbouring towns and villages by buses. Swamimalai railway station is situated about two kilometres south of the village proper. One has to cross two rivers Arasalar and Cauvery before reaching the village from the station. Swamimalai has a population of 4,914 according to 1961 Census.

The temple is built on an artificial hillock about sixty feet above the ground level. It is an ancient one said to have

been built by the famous King Kartha Veeryarjuna whose statue could be seen on a pillar in the temple. Renovations were made subsequently by one late Sri Arunachalam Chettiar of Nagarathar Community some fifty years ago. The main shrine is a specimen of old architecture while the rest are by recent renovations.

The hill temple which covers an area of about 2·00 acre, has a beautiful five tiered gopuram over the southern entrance. The sannadhi of Lord Swaminathar is located on the top of the hill. The hill temple is provided with a flight of steps numbering sixty and it is said that they represent the Hindu cycle of sixty years, each step representing a Tamil year. After ascending thirty steps from the ground floor one sees the life-like images of Muruga and Siva, the former imparting the divine message to the latter. The presiding deity, Sri Swaminathaswamy who is represented by a six feet high granite icon in a standing posture offers a spectacular darshan to devotees in the sanctum sanctorum. A noteworthy feature here is the presence of an elephant before the Lord instead of a peacock as is usually found in the Muruga Temples.

In the ground floor of the temple, there are separate shrines dedicated to Sri Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi supposed to have been built by Varaguna Pandya Deva, King of Madurai. Pilgrims congregate in large numbers in the big hall opposite to this sannadhis. There is a separate sanctum here for Sri Vinayagar by the side of the Dwajasthambam. He is popularly known as Nethira Vinayagar. There are four sacred Theerthams here, viz., Vajra Theertham, Kumara Thurai (Cauvery), Saravana Theertham and Nethira Pushkarani, each having a sanctity of its own.

Poojas are performed six times a day by hereditary priests. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 3,84,000 of which the costly golden Sahasranamamalai in which the Sahasranama Manthras are engraved deserves special mention. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 135·11 acres of wet and 263·24 acres of dry lands apart from nine houses which fetch an annual

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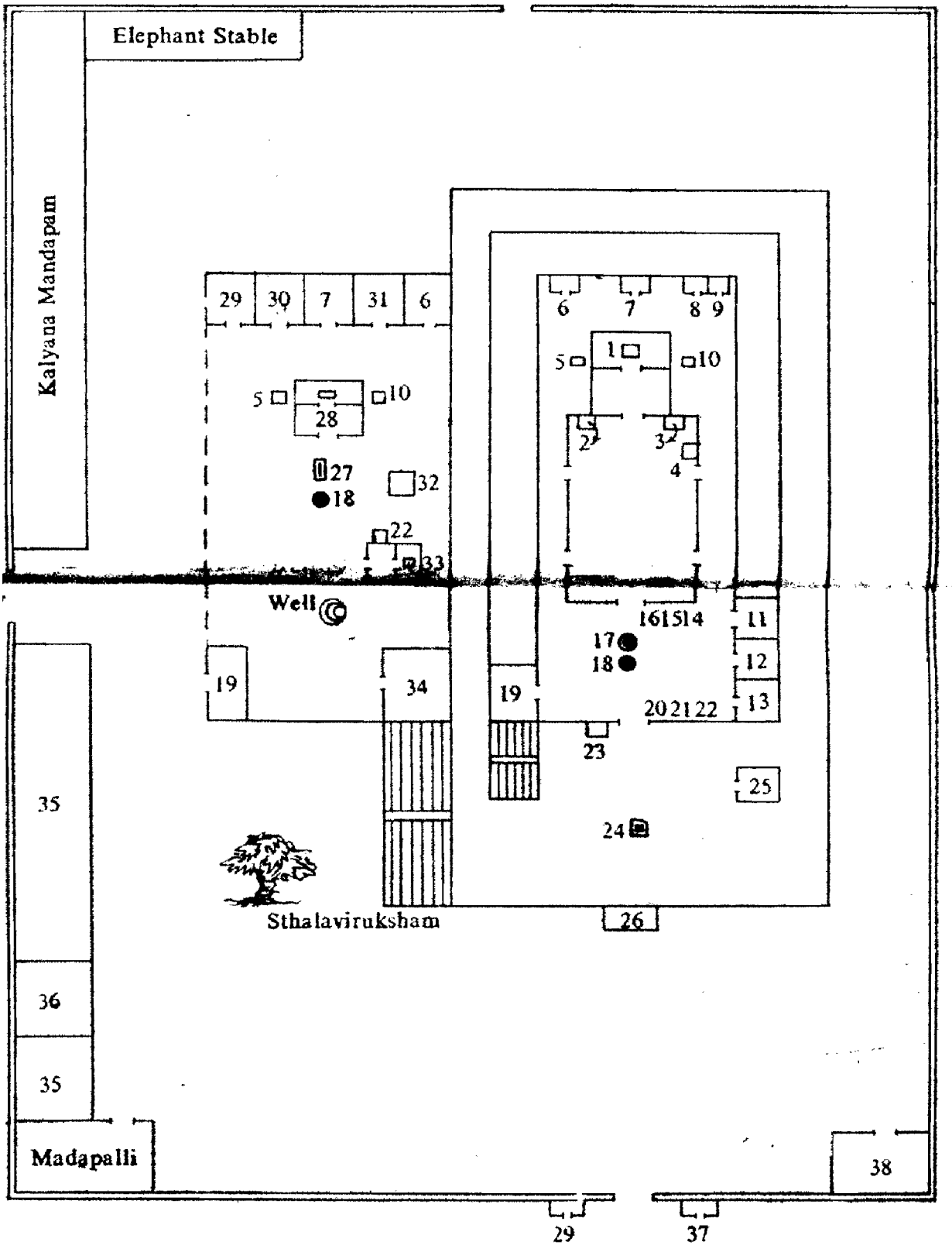
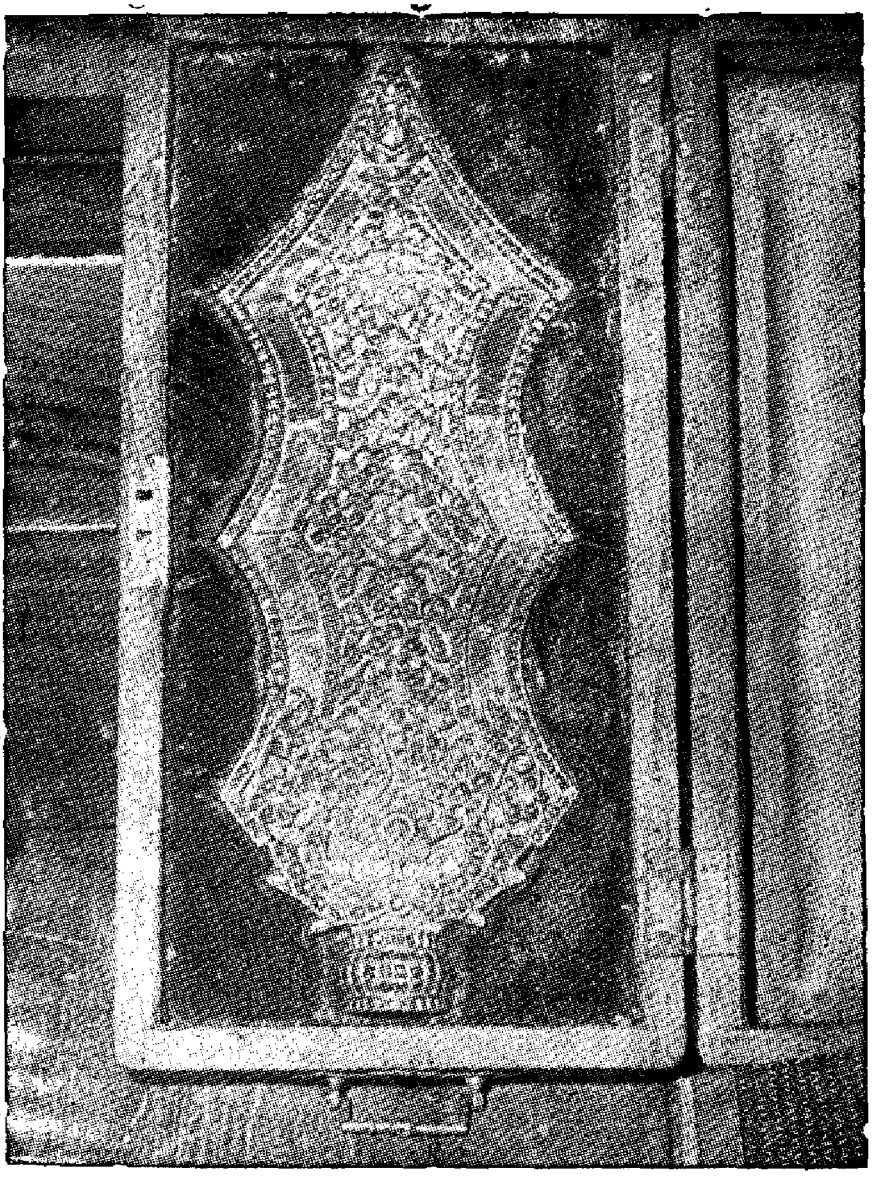
SRI SWAMINATHASWAMY TEMPLE

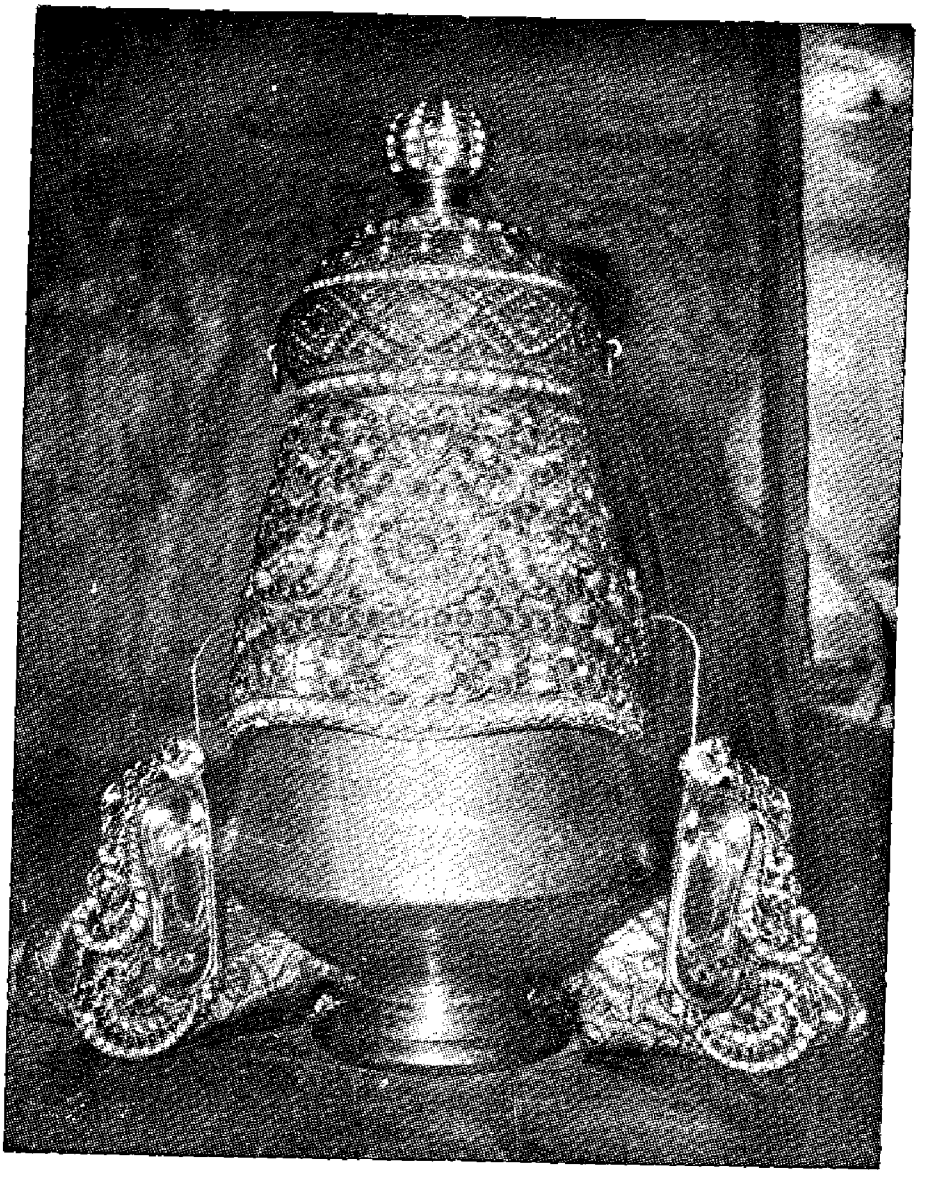
SWAMIMALAI

(Not to Scale)





The upper part of the spear (Vel)
with precious gems
Sri Swaminathaswamy Temple,
Swamimalai.



The crown with precious gems
Sri Swaminathaswamy Temple,
Swamimalai

income of about Rs. 1,33,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 75,000 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 1,25,000 per annum. There are two big *Thers(cars)*, a silver ratham, a palanquin and a wonderful collection of Vahanas made of gold, silver and wood of which the golden peacock, and the silver rishabam deserve special mention.

Of the several major festivals celebrated here throughout the year, the six day Skandha Sashti, Valli Kalyanam and the ten day Thirukkarthigai are the most important ones when over 50,000 devotees from far and near congregate. On the monthly Kirthigai day about 10,000 devotees gather here to witness the special worship. About Rs. 5,000 is collected through Archana and Abishega tickets on these days. About six hundred marriages are performed in the temple round the year. It is said that a record number of seventy six marriages were performed on a single day. The popular belief is that couple getting married here will be blessed with children. There is a Kalyana Mandapam attached to the temple.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

"Aaru Padai Veedu' are the six places where Lord Muruga as the generalissimo of the divine army is said to have sojourned before quelling the demon *Surapadman*. Swamimalai is the fourth among them. Legend has it that it is here that Muruga, the son, expounded the meaning of *'OM'*, the Pranava Manthra to Lord Siva, the father. The presiding deity is, therefore, rightly known as Sri Swaminathar and the place as Swamimalai.

Saint Arunagirinathar has sung in praise of the presiding deity of this shrine. Being one of the most famous "*Prarthana Sthalams*" in South India, thousands of devotees

from all over Tamil Nadu pour in during monthly Kirthigais to worship Lord Swaminathar.

The story goes that Varaguna Pandyan who was proceeding to Thiruvidaimarudhur in order to expiate the sin of having killed some one unknowingly, happened to stay at this holy place. He used to take his first meal of the day only after worshipping Lord Sundaresa and so he installed a beautiful Lingam and the image of Goddess Meenakshi here and performed poojas.

It is said that a blind man from Quilon fasted a whole day and after taking bath in the sacred river Cauvery, popularly called Kumara Theertham and in the holy temple tank Nethira Pushkarani happened to go over to this temple with the help of some passers by. When he reached the Sannadhi of Sri Nethira Vinayagar, he suddenly got back his power of vision and from that day onwards the Vinayagar came to be called *Nethira* Vinayagar (i.e., eye giver).

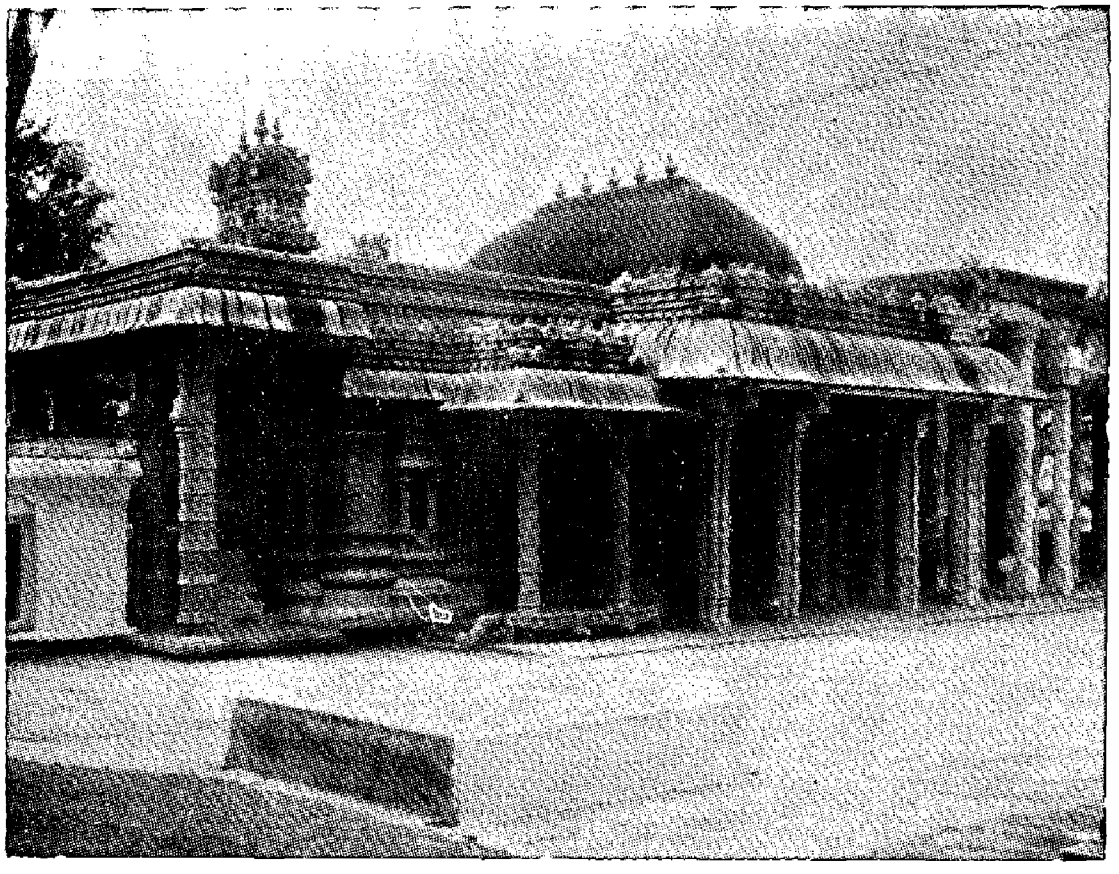
As a great Prarthana Sthalam and one of the famous "Aaru Padai Veedu", Swamimalai attracts thousands of devotees from all over Tamil Nadu throughout the year.

THIRUVALANCHULI

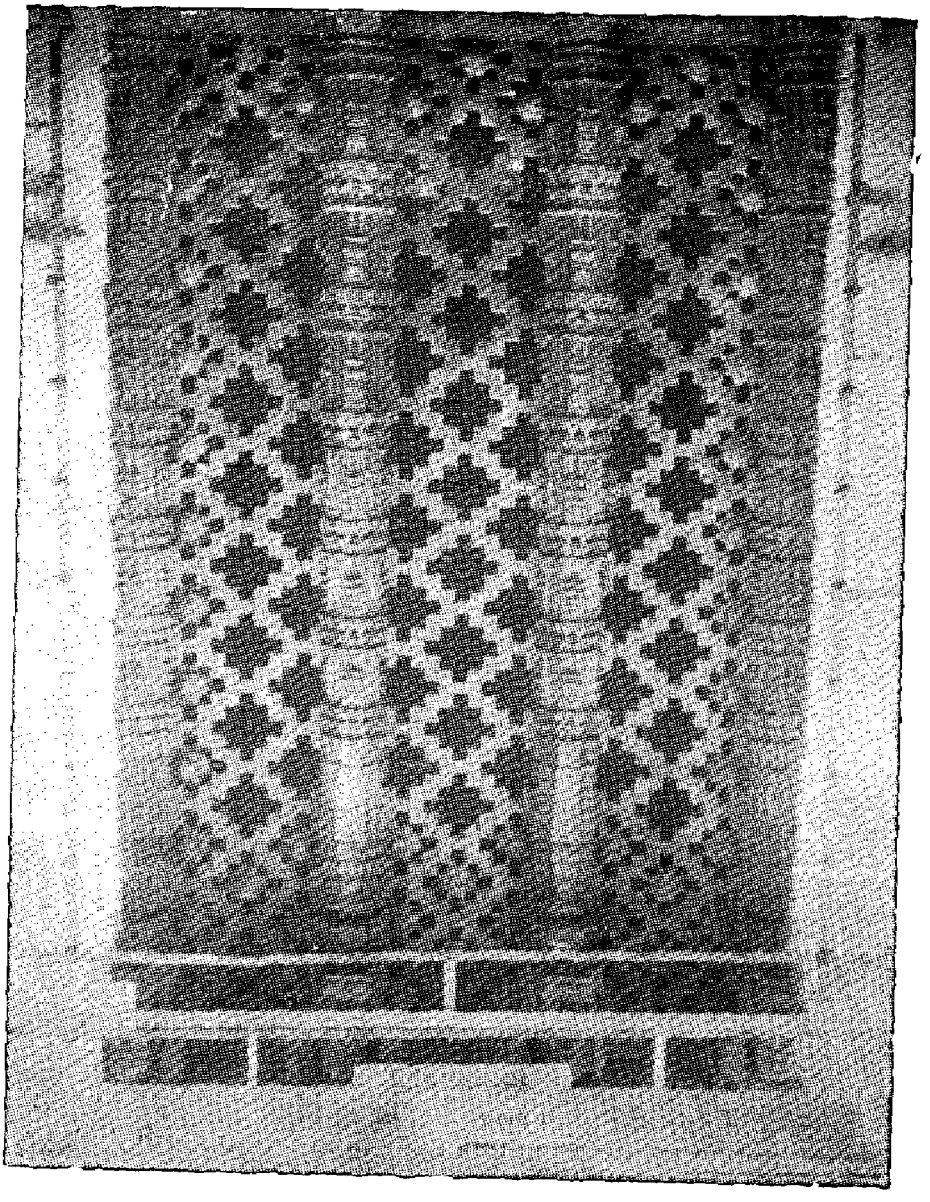
12. Sri Swedha Vinayagar Temple

Between Swamimalai railway station and the temple of Sri Swaminathaswami in a sequestered place in quietude called Thiruvalanchuzhi, lies a hoary shrine dedicated to Vinayagar. The characteristic feature of the idol is its colour, Viz., white. Hence the God is called Swetha Vinayagar or white Vinayagar. The idol is said to have been formed out of sea foam. Thiruvalanchuli has a population of 6,426 according to the 1961 Census.

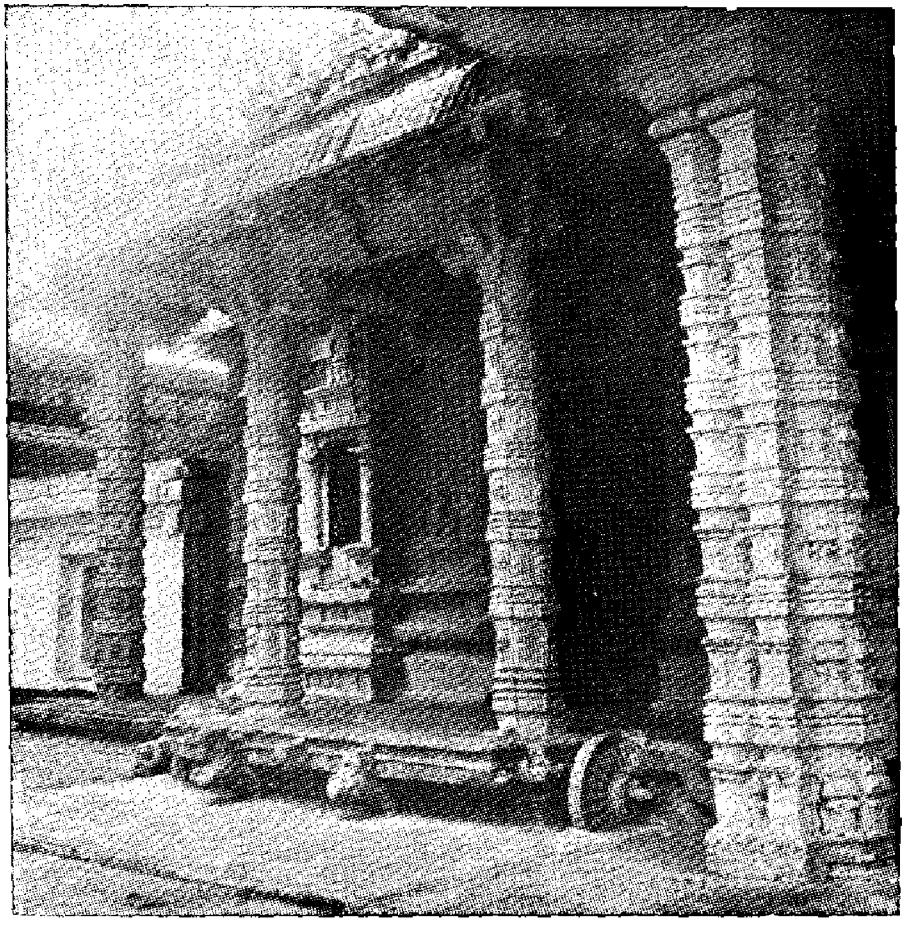
The temple is noted for its architectural grandeur. Its intricate stone windows and exquisite sculputres are note-



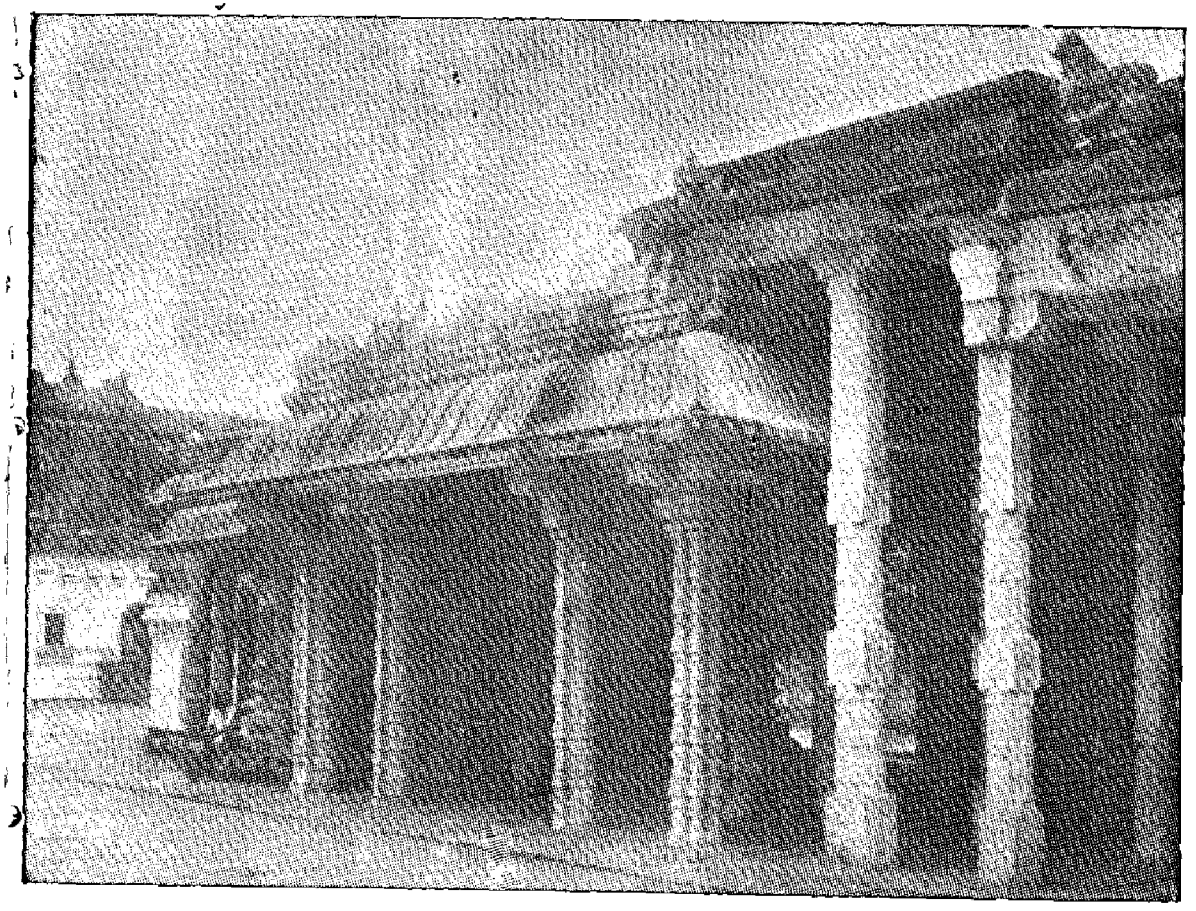
The front mandapam
Sri Swetha Vinayagar Temple,
Thiruvalanchuli.



Beautiful stone carvings
Sri Swetha Vinayagar Temple,
Thiruvalanchuli.



Beautifully carved stone pillars
Sri Swetha Vinayagar Temple,
Thiruvalanchuli.



Sri Swetha Vinayagar's shrine,
Thiruvalanchuli.

worthy. This huge temple which covers an area of about 7·25 acres has a five-tiered Rajagopuram in front. The gopuram is of artistic merit though it looks weather-beaten. There are three parakarams, five mandapams and three vimanams with plaster figures on them apart from several delicately carved granite pillars. The mandapam in which Sri Vinayagar is enshrineld is full of architectural splendour. There are several interesting stone inscriptions on the walls of the main sanctum belonging to the periods of reputed Chola Kings like Rajakesari Varman, Vikrama Chola Udaiyar, Rajendra Thevan and others. They refer to various endowments made by them for the maintenance of the temple. There is a separate shrine for Sri Kabartheeswarar who is a Pradhishta Lingam.

Karpaganadheswarar, Chadaimudinathar and Vedachelanathar are the other beautiful names adorning Him. His divine consort is known as Sri Brahannayagi and Periyanayagi. Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Arumugaswamy, Mahalakshmi, Dakshinamurthy, Natarajar, Bikshadanar, Eranda Maharishi, Saneeswarar, Bairvar, Ashtabujakali and Chandikeswarar are the other sub-deities here. A noteworthy feature here is the absence of the Navagrahas and the presence of a separate shrine for Sri Bairavar. Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary priests who are paid a monthly salary from the temple revenues. The ancient jewels in the temple in gold and silver are worth over Rs. 1,500. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 17·42 acres of wet and 106·78 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 5,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are three ancient rishabams, a bandicoot and a peacock vahanam here, all made of wood.

Vinayaga Chathurthi is the only major festival which is celebrated for ten days when about 1,000 devotees from the neighbouring villages congregate. In the month of Panguni, scenes from Valli Kalyanam are enacted with great eclat. The festival deity of Lord Muruga in the form of hunter comes with his retinue from Swamimalai on the day. As a

sub-temple of Swamimalai, it is being managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

It is said that because of the sanctity of this place, the sacred river Cauvery changed its natural course to the right (*valam*) side and hence the place has assumed this name. Sakthivanam, Thirunavartham and Dakshinavartham are the other beautiful names adorning this sthalam. It is said that Lord Brahma, Devendra, Parasakthi, Adhi Sesha, Eranda Munivar, Thirugnanasambandhar, Thirunavukkarasar and Arunagirinathar had worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. The sacred river Cauvery, Arasalaru and Jata Theertham are the sacred theerthams of this sthalam and the holy Vilva Tree is the Sthala Viruksham.

According to Hindu tradition and custom, Sri Vinayagar should be worshipped before commencing any important work. But the Devas in their haste while churning the ocean to make themselves immortal, overlooked this worship and as a consequence they got deadly poison instead of nectar. On realising their mistake, they at once created an image of Vinayagar from the sea foam and prayed for better results. This milky white image became the tutelary deity of Indra. During his penance at Swamimalai, Indra placed the image at this spot and subsequently found it hard to move it when a divine voice commanded him to construct a shrine for Vinayagar. As this shrine has the sacred idol of Vinayagar in the form of sea foam, the presiding deity is known as "*Swetha Vinayagar*" (white Vinayagar). It is believed that on the Vinayaga Chathurthi day in the month of September every year, Indra pays a visit to carry out his pooja. Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Arunagirinathar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of Sri Swetha Vinayagar.

Though not as famous as Swamimalai, still this historically famous shrine of Swetha Vinayaga attracts a large number of devotees who visit Swamimalai every day. Steps have

been taken to renovate the temple at a cost of about Rs. 2·5 lakhs.

2. Sri Soundararaja Perumal Temple

Sri Soundararaja Perumal Temple about ten kilometres from Kumbakonam is centrally situated in the village Thiruvalanchuzhi. This temple faces east. The front gopuram is having five storeys whereas the inside gopuram is having only three storeys. There are two prakarams. Over the sanctum sanctorum, there is a Vimanam with delightful stucco figures. The idol of the festival deity Lord Gopalamurthy is very attractive. The idols of Perumal, Nachiyar, Chakkarathalwar, Krishna, (*Kalinganarthanam*) and Thirumangai Alwar excavated by the Archaeological Department are kept in the mandapam in front of the presiding deity. They are also very attractive to behold.

There is no evidence as to the age of the temple. The Chola and the Vijayanagara Kings carried out renovations to this temple. In 1932 the then Trustee renovated this temple from Garba Graha to inside gopuram spending about Rs. 15,000 from the temple funds. There are some interesting inscriptions here, some of which have been copied in 1915 and later published.

There is a belief that Indra made gifts to get rid of leprosy. Thirumal appeared before him and got the gift. Indra got rid of the disease. Thirumal also gave darshan. As a token of gratitude, Indra built this temple. He also installed the idol of Lord Vinayagar in front of the front gopuram.

The presiding deity is called Soundararaja Perumal and Goddess Soundaravalli. The plinth area of the temple is about 61, 200 sq. ft. There are four poojas daily by a Bhattachariar. The temple owns about 27 acres of wet land and 20 acres of dry land. The temple is getting about Rs. 12,000 annually from the above lands.

There is no annual Brahmothsavam in this temple. But some monthly festivals are going on. Navarathri is an important festival here. This will be celebrated for ten days in Purattasi month. Defferent kinds of alankaras will be made for the festival idol of Goddess Sri Soundaravalli Thayar during these ten days.

An Executive Officer and three Trustees are managing this temple.

OPPILIAPPAN KOVIL

Sri Venkatachalapathy Devasthanam

Oppiliappan Kovil is one of the 108 sacred places of Vaishnavites. This Prarthana Sthalam is situated at a distance of 1·6 kilometres from Thirunageswaram railway station. It is a Panchayat having a population of about 8,254. Town buses ply at regular intervals between Kumbakonam and Oppiliappan Kovil.This place has been immortalised in the verses of the great Vaishnavite Saints Poigai Alwar, Pey Alwar, Thirumangai Alwar and Nammalwar. It is remarkable that this is one of the five shrines of Chola Nadu which have been glorified by Nammalwar in his verses.

Thiruvinnagar, Oppiliappan Sannadhi and Uppiliappan Sannadhi are some of the names with which the place is known. The presiding deity is called Thiruvinnagarappan, Oppiliappan, Srinivasan and Sri Venkatachalapathy. The divine consort is called Bhumi Devi, Bhumi Nachiyar and Vasundarai.

This small but impressive temple has a fifty feet tall front gopuram. The idol of the Perumal is in a standing posture facing east. The Nachiyar is in a sitting posture facing north. This is a Vadagalai temple. The shrine of Sri Vedhanta Desikar is situated near the Garba Graha. It is said that the Lord appeared before Nammalwar in five

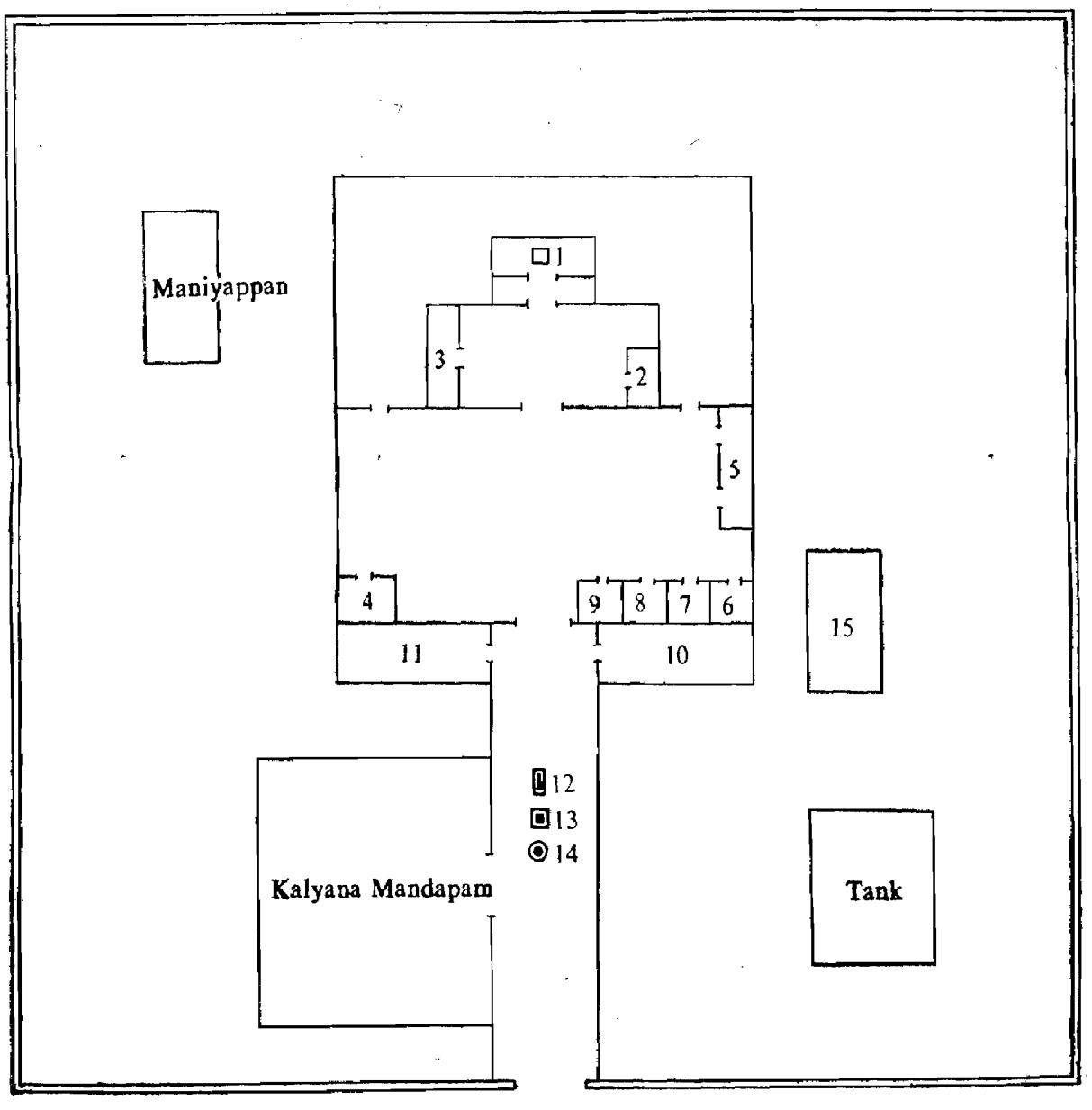
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

1. Venkatachalapathy Perumal Bhoomidevi & Markandeyarishi.
2. Desikar
3. Vahana Godown
4. Madapalli
5. Azhwars
6. Ramar
7. Palliarai
8. Yagasalai
9. Bashyankar
10. Vasantha Mandapam
11. Devasthanam Office
12. Garudan
13. Dwajasthambam
14. Balipeedam
15. Ennappan

SRI VENKATACHALAPATHY PERUMAL TEMPLE

UPPILIYAPPANKOVIL

(Not to Scale)



forms - Ponnappan, Maniappan, Muthappan, Ennappan and Thiruvinnagarappan. The saint has sung in praise of each of these names. Nammalwar called the Lord in a mood of ecstasy as "*Tan Opparilli Appan*" meaning the Lord without an equal.

An interesting legend concerning this shrine is to be found in the *Brahmanda Puranam.* Once Sage Markandeya was performing penance at this site. He found to his surprise one day a female child on the ground by the side of a *Thulasi* plant. The sage brought up the child and she was named Bhumi Devi. When she came of age, her hands were coveted by an old man. The shocked god-father who was naturally not for the alliance gave an excuse saying that the girl was not conversant even with simple household chores and that in all probability she would forget even to add salt while preparing food. After arguing for long, the old man revealed his real form. He was none else than Lord Narayana Himself. The Lord told the wonder struck sage that He would not take salt at all. The Lord and Bhumi Devi were married and they permanently settled down in that place. It is significant that even to this day salt is not included in the daily *Neivedhyam* or offering to the Lord.

The temple rituals are performed according to the Vaikanasa Agamam. This old temple is being renovated from time to time. A Kumbabishegam was performed in 1965. The Lord is popularly known as a benefactor and granter of boons. The temple ranks next only to Tirupathi in this respect. The temple gets sizable income from its lands and other immovable properties. It also owns a good number of gold and silver jewels.

The festivals of the temple are Brahmothsavams in the months of Panguni and Purattasi, the twelve day Kalyana Uthsavam in Ayppasi when music concerts of well known musicians are held and the seven day Vasantha Uthsavam in Vaikasi. The Sravanam day every month is sacred to the Lord. Bhumi Devi is by the Lord's side on all

the festival days. There is no separate temple for the divine consort. The festival image of Sri Vedantha Desikar is also taken out during all festivals. There is a *Ther (car)*, a palanquin and a ratham in the temple besides silver and wooden vahanas. A Kalyana Mandapam was built here recently in connection with a Koti Archana which was held on a grand scale.

The temple is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of five members and an Executive Officer of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

PANDANALLUR

Sri Pasupatheeswarar And Sri Adhikesava Perumal Temples

The historic village of Pandanallur is situated in the north-east corner of Kumbakonam Taluk. The Siva and Vishnu temples are located a little away from the village on the site of an old fort. Around the temples one can see even now the old moast. The village is easily accessible by both bus and train. It has a population of 3,694.

Since there are numerous inscriptions on the temple walls relating to the endowments made by Chola Kings and their successors, it may be said that the temple is an ancient one.

The presiding deities of the two temples are respectively Lord Pasupatheeswarar with Venubujambikai and Sri Adhikesava Perumal with Parimalavalli Thayar. There are other deities like Vinayagar, Durgai and Brahma in the temple of Sri Pasupatheeswarar. One can worship Srinivasa Perumal, Alwars, Hanumar and other Gods in the temple of Sri Adhikesava Perumal.

There are two Gurukkals for Siva temple and an Archakar for Sri Perumal temple. Poojas are performed in the Siva temple as per Karana Agamam and in the Vishnu temple as per Pancharathram.

There are gold and silver jewels worth about Rs. 56,000. There are 614 acres of wet and 240 acres of dry lands for the temple. There are also buildings which are rented out. It is said that all the above lands were endowed by Chola Kings.

There are about fourteen wooden vahanas, three silver vahanas and a silver palanquin for the Siva temple. Masi Magham festival for Siva temple and Panguni Uthiram for Perumal temple are the two major annual festivals of the temple. Apart from these, periodical festivals are being conducted.

There is an interesting legend concerning this shrine. It is said that once Parvathi was playing with her friends. Her interest in the game was so much that the play went on endlessly. Parvathi did not take notice of Her husband Siva Himself. Put out by this indifference, Siva kicked the ball (*Pandhu*) with which they were playing. The ball came down to the earth and Parvathi realised Her mistake. She apologised to Her Lord. But Siva bade her to go to the earth in the form of a cow and do penance at the spot where the ball lay. Accordingly Parvathi came to this spot which was then a forest of '*Konnai*' trees. She was accompained by Lord Vishnu in the form of cowherd. Parvathi worshipped the Swayambu Lingam for long and rejoined Her husband. Siva and Vishnu settled down as Sri Pasupatheeswarar and Sri Adhikesava Perumal. The place came to be known as Pandanainallur or Pandanallur.

The temples are under the administrative control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. There are two Trustees and an Executive Officer who manage the affairs of the temple.

TIRUPPANANDHAL

1. Sri Arunajadeswaraswamy Temple (Senjadai Appar)

Tiruppanandhal noted for its richly endowed Saivite Mutt is at a distance of about eighteen kilometres east-north-east of Kumbakonam. The Siva temple here contains a number of inscriptions dating from the reign of Parantaka I to the Vijayanagar times. The village has a population of 5,901 according to 1961 Census.

Since Thadagai, the demoness worshipped the Lord here, the deity is also known as Thadageswarar. The Sthala Viruksham is Palmyrah (*Panaimaram*) in Tamil. Hence the place is called Thiruppanandhal.

The temple with its lofty towers, massive walls and spacious Prakaram adds special charm to the place. The eastern and western entrances are adorned by towers with artistic images. The presiding deity, Sri Arunajadeswarar or Senjadai Appar faces west. Goddess Periyanayaki (or Brahannayaki) faces east in a separate sanctum. As one enters the western "*Gopura vasal*" one comes across the beautiful sixteen-pillared mandapam which too may be a later addition. To the north of this mandapam is the Vahana-mandapam and on the eastern side is Naga Kannigai Theertham. Passing the inner gopuram, one can worship in the prakaram the sacred tree and the Lingam worshipped by Thadagai. The beautiful painting of Thadagai worship on the roof of the front mandapam illustrates that what cannot be achieved by might can be achieved by worship.

Legend has it that Thadagai, the demoness regularly worshipped the Lord to beget a child. One day as she was about to garland the Lord she had to adjust her clothes. As she was finding it difficult to do so with the garland in her hands, the Lingam slightly bent to enable her to offer the garland. The story goes that a Chola King tried in vain to bring the Lingam to the original position with the help of men and horses. Later *Kunguliyakalaya Nayanar*, the famous

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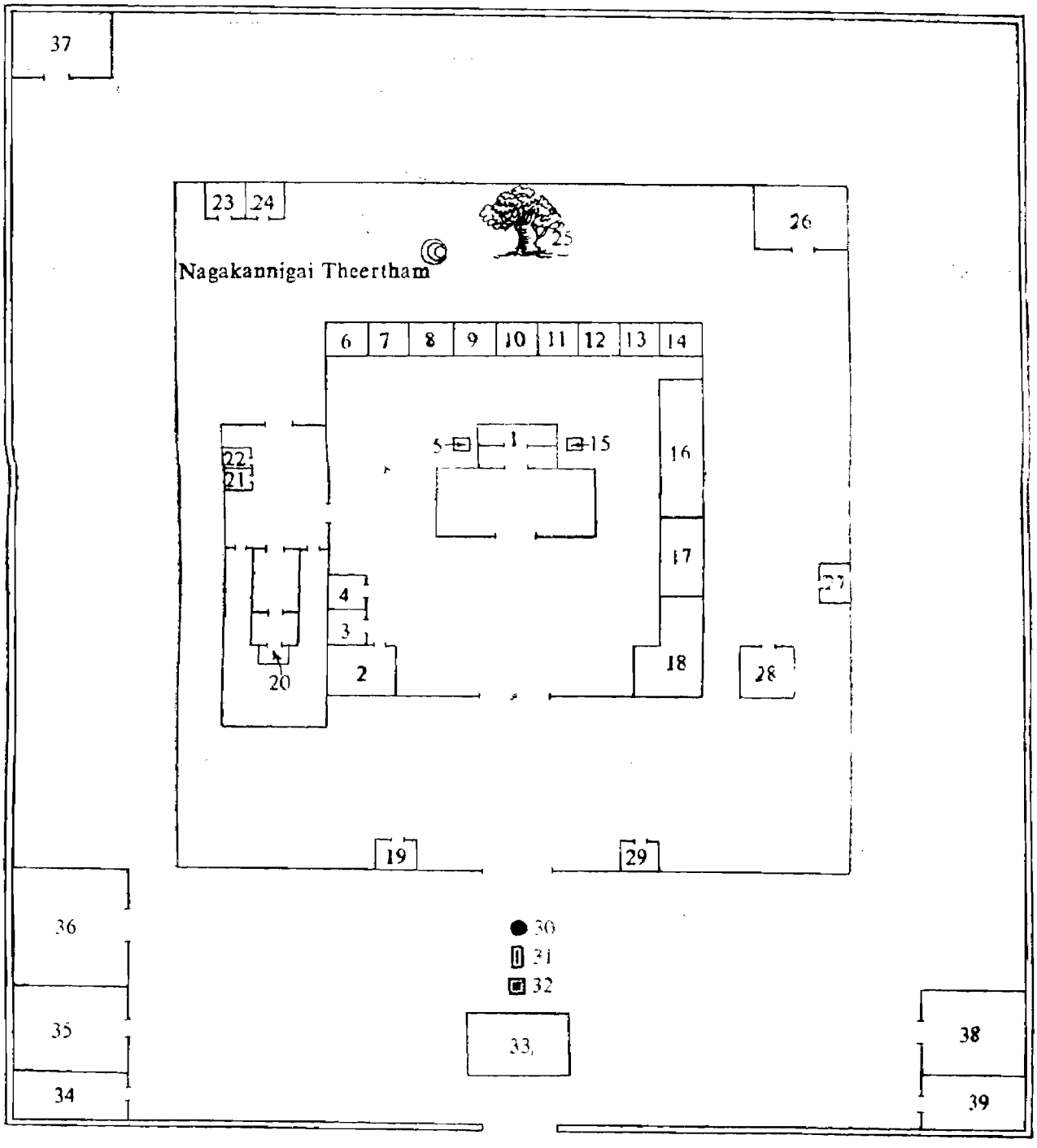
1. Aruna Jadeswarar (Moolavar)
2. Subramaniar, Valli & Deivayanai
3. Natarajar & Sivagamasundari
4. Lakshmi
5. Dakshinamoorthy
6. Bairavar
7. Chandran
8. Prithivi Lingam
9. Appu Lingam
10. Theyu Lingam
11. Vayu Lingam
12. Akasa Lingam
13. Suriyan
14. Kasinathar
15. Chandikeswari
16. Sixty-three Nayanmars
17. Sapthakannimars
18. Somaskandhar
19. Chockanathar
20. Perianayagi
21. Adipooramman (Uthsavar)
22. Palliarai
23. Yagasalai
24. Navagrahas
25. Sthalaviruksham
26. Madapalli
27. Nalvar
28. Anda Vinayagar
29. Kungiliya Kalyana Nayanar
30. Balipeedam
31. Nandhi
32. Dwajasthambam
33. Thatti Sutti Mandapam
34. Cattle Shed
35. Mandapam
36. Tank
37. Yagasalai
38. Devasthanam Office
39. Store Room

SRI ARUNA JADESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

TIRUPPANANDAL

(Not to Scale)



devotee came here and restored the Lingam's original position by means of a rope tied to his neck.

There is a separate sanctum for Vinayagar. At the north-western corner of the Lord's shrine is the image of Sri Subramaniar. The other deities are Natarajar, Muthukumaraswamy (festival idol), Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Durgai, Pancha Bhootha Lingams, Bairavar, Suryan, Chandran,, Chandeswarar and Dakshinamurthy.

As Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had sung the praise of the Lord, it is evident that the shrine should have been very popular even in the Seventh Century. From the temple inscriptions, we learn that the person who constructed the temple was one Thiruppanandhal Nakkan Dharani. The Goddess's shrine came up due to the efforts of Venkurudaiyar Anbarkarasu Maruda Manicka Villavanrasar.

The rulers of the region have been renovating the temple from time to time. In the recent past, a Kumbabishegam was performed in July 1968 after the renovation of western gopuram. Poojas are performed six times daily. The temple has about 797·75 acres of wet and 294·66 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,43,000. Its jewellery is valued at Rs. 72,000. The ten day Brahmothsavam in the month of Chithirai is very popular. The temple has two wooden *Thers* (*cars*) and a wooden Ratham.

The temple inscriptions are of historical value also. According to one of these, the village was the scene of a battle between the Cholas and the Pandyas. Another shows how the temple funds were being embezzled by the priests and how Kulothunga I punished one of them.

2. Sri Veeriamman Temple

The temple dedicated to the village Goddess Veeriamman is situated at about ten kilometres from Aduthurai railway station on the bus route from Kumbakonam to Anaikkarai (Lower Anaicut).

Besides the Garba Graham, there are Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam in the temple. Bali Peedam and flag mast are also there. Over the sanctum sanctorum is a beautiful fifteen feet high vimanam. In the entrance to the Arthamandapam are the artistic images of Dwara Palakas. There is only one prakaram in this temple.

The presiding deity is Veeriamman. The vigraha is about four feet high and is having eight hands. In Thevaram, Appar had made a passing reference to this deity. The details regarding the origin of this temple have been given in the Tiruppanandhal Sthala Puranam. Two poojas are performed daily.

Sri Sadayappa Swamigal II who was the Head of Sri Kasi Mutt Religious Charities during 1798-1836 performed the Kumbabishegam of this shrine. Sri Ramalinga Swamigal II (1853-1880) had installed some other deities and had constructed compound walls. He had also built a separate shrine for Chathurbuja Kali on the eastern side of the temple.

Sri La Sri Kasivasi Arulnandhi Thambiran has donated some gold jewels and silver vessels worth about Rs. 8,500. This temple owns about 1009·05 acres of wet and 63·75 acres of dry lands from which the temple is getting about Rs. 60,000 annually. A big festival is celebrated during Panguni month for ten days.

There is a belief that Lord Siva who blessed Thadagai ordered her to create a holy water in her name. Accordingly she created that and on its south bank installed Sri Veeriamman and worshipped Her.

The hereditary Trustee Sri La Sri Arulanandhi Thambiran is managing the temple.

SENGANUR

Sri Sakthigireeswaraswamy Temple

Senganur is noted for its ancient Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Sakthigireeswarar who is a Swayambu Lingam. The temple which faces east covers an area of about seventy five cents. It is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train. It is a small Panchayat having a population of 1,143. Thanjavur, the District Headquarters and Kumbakonam, the Taluk Headquarters are about 57 and 19 kilometres away respectively. The temple is said to have been built by some famous Chola King Koch-Chengannan some 700 years ago. Subsequently it was renovated by the head of the Thiruppanandhal Mutt and the then Trustee of the temple, the Mirasdar of Senganur, some hundred years ago. There are two prakarams and two sancta here. There are several granite pillars in the shrine.

Poojas are performed twice daily by non-hereditary priests. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 4·14 acres of wet and 4·44 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 900 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants and for the upkeep and general maintenance of the temple.

Legend has it that Lord Muruga had offered worship to the Lord here according to Saiva Agamam and received the famous " *Rudhra Pasupathasthra* ". The interesting episode finds place in the *Kumarapuri Padalam* of the *Skandha Puranam.*

Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had also visited this shrine and composed a sacred ' Padhigam ' consisting of eleven verses in praise of the Lord. According to *Periya Puranam,* this was the birth place of the famous *Chandikeswara Nayanar* to whom the Lord offered darshan and conferred on him the title of Chandikeswarar.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

TIRULOKI

Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple

Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple is one more ancient Saivite shrine of importance in the neighbourhood of Kumbakonam whose age is not known definitely. The temple is located in a place called Tiruloki which is about ten kilometres from Aduthurai railway station. Tiruloki is a small Panchayat having a population of 2,179. Thanjavur, the District Headquarters and Kumbakonam, the Taluk Headquarters are 64 and 24 kilometres away respectively.

The temple which covers an area of about forty cents is facing east and reveals the later Chola type of architecture. There are two prakarams and two sancta here. The presiding deity of the temple Sri Sundareswarar is a Pradhishta Lingam here. His divine consort known as Akilandeswari is situated in a separate sanctum in a standing posture. The images of Sri Rishabarudar and Kalyana Sundarar about three feet and five feet in height respectively are beautiful works of art. They are carved out of a single block of stone. It is said that a staunch Saivite devotee by name *Karuvur Devar* had visited this shrine and sung eleven sacred verses in his famous "*Thiru Visaippa*" in praise of the Lord here.

A non-hereditary priest performs four poojas daily. The temple possesses a few gold and silver ornaments worth about Rs. 700 mostly donated by devotees. The lands of the temple amount to a little over seventy acres and they fetch a sum of about Rs. 4,700 annually by way of rent. This income is used for the day-to-day maintenance of the temple. There is an old palanquin here made of wood.

Skandha Sashti in Ayppasi (September-October), Thiruvadhirai in Margazhi and Deepam in Karthigai are the important festive days in this temple.

Legend has it that Sage Brahaspathi did a severe penance here and got redemption from a curse by the grace of the Lord and attained eternal bliss.

A single hereditary Trustee is managing the temple which comes under the purview of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

BHASKARARAJAPURAM

H/O KOOTHANUR

Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy Temple

Bhaskararajapuram is noted for its famous Saivite temple dedicated to Sri Bhaskareswarar who is in the form of Pradhishta Lingam here. It is situated about two kilometres from Narasingapet railway station. Buses plying between Thanjavur and Kumbakonam pass through this village. Thanjavur and Kumbakonam are about 64 and 23 kilometres away respectively. The place got its name from Bhaskara Royar, a great Saint who lived in the Seventeenth Century. It is a hamlet of Koothanur Panchayat which has a population of 3,270.

The temple which covers an area of about thirty cents has a gopuram in the front. It is believed that it was built by Bhaskara Royar, a Maharashtrian Saint some three hundred years ago. It is said that his devoted wife also worked with him shoulder to shoulder in erecting this beautiful shrine. Thanks to the efforts of the local people, the Kumbabishegam of this shrine took place on the 20th of August 1953.

There are two prakarams and two sancta here apart from an Arthamandapam and a Mahamandapam.

Poojas are performed twice a day by non-hereditary priests. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 8·42 acres of wet and 3 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance.

Arudhra Darshanam during Thiruvadhirai in the month of Margazhi (December-January) is the only important festival celebrated every year when about three hundred local devotees congregate here.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THIRUKODIKAVAL

H/O. KOOTHANUR

Sri Thirukodiswaraswamy Temple

Situated on the northern bank of the Cauvery within three kilometres from Narasingapet railway station, Sri Thirukodiswaraswamy Temple is a Saivite shrine of importance. A small temple on an area of three and half acres, it is said to be an old one having been built some three hundred years ago. There are several ancient and interesting stone inscriptions here in the backyard of the temple. The place Thirukodikaval is connected with several sacred centres by bus and train. It is a hamlet of Koothanur Panchayat which has a population of 3,270. Thanjavur and Kumbakonam are fifty-three and twenty four kilometres away respectively.

There are two prakarams and two sancta here apart from several stone pillars. The presiding deity of the temple Thirukodiswarar is an installed Lingam facing east. His divine consort is in a standing posture in a separate sanctum. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have visited this shrine and composed several verses in praise of the Lord here. There is also a separate shrine here for Sri Vinayagar who is called "*Karai Ethia Vinayagar*".

A non-hereditary priest offers four poojas daily. The temple owns both antique and modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 12,000 of which the costly silver kavachams of the God and Goddesses deserve special

mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 43·29 acres of wet and 53·28 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 7,200 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance.

There are two palanquins and the following vahanas in the temple: rishabam, peacock, bandicoot, and horse, all made of wood apart from a big *Ther* (car) which is in a state of disrepair.

Sivarathri, Chithira Pournami, Adi Pooram and Vinayaga Chathurthi are the regular festivals celebrated here every year. Of these, Sivarathri and Chithira Pournami are the most important ones when about eight-hundred devotees from far and near congregate.

It is believed "*Mukkodi Devas*" (Three crores of Devas) had worshipped the Lord and received His blessings. This may account for the name of the village.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUMANGALAKUDI

Sri Prananathaswamy Temple

Situated within three kilometres from Aduthurai railway station, Sri Prananathaswamy Temple covers an area of about three acres. It is said to be an ancient temple though its period of origin is unknown. It is said that it would have been built during the period of the Chola Kings. There are a few stone inscriptions on the outer walls of this shrine. The place is served by bus service. It is a Panchayat having a population of 4,347.

The temple which has a beautiful hundred feet high gopuram in the front with stucco figures on it presents an impressive view. There are two prakarams and two sancta here. The presiding deity is Sri Prananathar, a Swayambu Lingam facing east. His divine consort known as Mangalambal is situated in a separate sanctum in a standing posture. It is said that Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and sung sacred verses in praise of the Lord. There are several ' Uthsavamurthis ' for the God, Goddess and other deities.

Regular poojas, four times a day are being conducted by non-hereditary priests. The jewels of the temple in gold and silver are antique and are valued at Rs. 3,000 of which the golden Padhakkam of the Goddess and the golden sacred thread of the God deserve special mention. The temple gets an annual income of about Rs.15,000 by way of rent from its landed properties which comprise about 85·53 acres of wet and 62·66 acres of dry lands. This amount is spent towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its day-to-day activities. The temple has an ancient *Ther* (car) made of wood some hundred years ago.

The festivals observed in this temple are Panguni Uthiram, Adi Pooram, Pathinettam Perukku, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti and Thiruvadhirai.

The Administration of the temple is vested in the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

SURIYANARKOVIL

Sri Suriyanarayanaswamy Temple

About fifteen kilometres east of Kumbakonam on the Aduthurai-Thirumangalakudi bus route is Suriyanarkovil which has the credit of having the only temple in South India

exclusively dedicated to the Sun God and His two consorts. It is a small Panchayat having a population of about 1,111. The famous Suryanarayanaswamy Temple here is believed to have been built by Kulothunga I. One can worship the Sun God, the presiding deity and the Navagrahas. Usha Devi and Pradusha Devi are the consorts of the Sun God.

Sun-worship in South India can be traced back to the Vedic age. In the Seventeenth Century, Mayura, a court poet of Emperor Harshavardhana composed the poem *Surya sadhaka* containing one hundred verses in praise of the Sun whose blessings cured him of leprosy. Temples for the Sun God came up at Madhera (Eleventh Century) in Gujarat and at Konarak (Thirteenth Century) in Orissa, The Sun worship, some scholars hold, spread to the south in course of time particularly when the Chola Emperors developed contact with the rulers of North Indian States.

There is a legend to the effect that the Navagrahas were absolved of sin after they performed a severe penance in Arkavanam, the present Suriyanarkovil. The temple of Sri Suriyanarayanaswamy has a fifty feet tall gopuram and a single prakaram. As soon as one crosses the western tower and enters the shrine, one finds an image of horse which is the mount of Sun God. In this idol a figure of lion is inset indicating that the Sun is the Lord of Leo. The temple occupies an area of about two acres.

Poojas are performed four times daily by a Gurukkal. The temple owns about 35·48 acres of wet and 16·79 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 5,000. There are a few wooden mounts which are used during festival times. The important festivals celebrated in the temple are : Ratha Sapthami, the first Sunday in the months of Avani and Karthigai and Vijaya Dhasami.

It is believed that if one worships in this Navagraha Kshetra, one will be absolved of all sins and diseases. The head of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

KANJANUR

Sri Agniswaraswamy Temple

Kanjanur, about eighteen kilometres to the east of Kumbakonam and on the northern bank of the Cauvery is considered a sacred place. Murthi (God), Sthalam (place) and Theertham (water) are all believed to be sacred. The temple dedicated to Sri Agniswaraswamy here has been visited by Saint Appar who has sung in praise of the Lord.

The presiding deity is Agniswaraswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The temple with its five-tier Rajagopuram faces east. The sanctum of Sri Agniswarar and that of the divine consort, Karpagambal are also facing east. There is an outer prakaram, a prakaram in the God's shrine and another in the Goddess's shrine.

Poojas are performed six times a day. The temple owns considerable jewellery and 188 acres of land. There are two silver Rishaba mounts, two *Thers* (cars) and a number of wooden mounts.

Palasa Vanam (forest of Jack Trees), Parasapuram, Brahmapuri, Agnisthalam and Kamsapuram are some of the names of this place. Jack Tree is the Sthala Viruksham. A number of legends are associated with this temple. Sage Parasarar is said to have been cured of insanity here. Lord Brahma had the privilege of witnessing at this place Siva and Parvathi in the guise of newly wedded couple. Agni, the God of Fire got rid of his disease after worshipping the Lord. Hence the presiding deity of the temple is known as Agniswara. A number of stories are current about an ardent devotee called Haradathar. Haradathar, the great devotee of Sri Agniswarar attained the feet of the Lord on the *Panchami* Thithi in the Tamil month of Thai. On Thai Panchami every year, a festival takes place on a big scale at the temple.

ADUTHURAI

Sri Abatsahayeswaraswamy Temple

Aduthurai, a small town with a population of 8,587 according to 1961 Census is on the road from Mayuram to Kumbakonam and has also a railway station. There is a Saivite temple dedicated to Abatsahayeswaraswamy built and endowed according to the inscriptions by Sembiyan Madeviyar, the queen mother of Uthama Chola (970-986). Endowments were made by other Chola Kings and a Pandya King perhaps Jatilavarman (Circa 770).

The Goddess is known as Pavazambigai. The temple is of conventional type with two prakarams and a fairly big gopuram in front. The pillars and walls are made of stones almost plain with very few carvings. The construction of the sanctum sanctorum has been so designed that for three days in a year the sun's rays directly fall on the Lingam. These days are of special significance when special poojas are performed.

The Moolavar is a Pradhishta Lingam. Besides the presiding deities, the idols of Subramaniar, Durgai, Amman, Natarajar and Vinayagar have also been installed. There are also several festival idols.

There are ordinary jewels of recent make which are worth about Rs. 1,000. There are also some wooden vahanas, important among them being rishabam, horse and swan.

There are about twelve acres of both wet and dry lands and the annual income is estimated at about Rs. 6,000. This is said to be utilised for daily poojas and conduct of festivals etc.

The important festivals of the temple are Navarathri, Thiruvadhirai and Sivarathri.

The place was formerly known as Thirukurunguthurai, that is, the site where according to the legend the Monkey King 'Vali' was shot by Rama and obtained His grace.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Board of Trustees to look after the management of the temple.

THIRUVIDAIMARUDHUR

Sri Mahalingaswamy Temple

Thiruvidaimarudhur is situated about ten kilometres north-east of Kumbakonam. It is well served by both bus and rail. The population of this town according to 1961 Census is about 9,194.

The place is noted for its Siva temple which is large, ancient, well-sculptured and particularly sacred. The temple is in the heart of the town. While the temple at Thiruvidaimarudhur is dedicated to Lord Mahalingar there are other famous shrines in the neighbourhood Sri Vinayagar at Thiruvalanchuzhi, Sri Subramaniyar at Swamimalai, Sri Chandikeswarar at Thiruvaipadi, the Navagrahas at Suryanarkoil, Sri Natarajar at Chidambaram, Sri Bairavar at Sirkali, Sri Nandhi Devar at Thiruvaduthurai, Sri Somaskandhar at Thiruvarur and Sri Dakshinamurthy at Thiruvalangudi.

This holy place having been established in a grove of Marudha Trees gained the name of Marudhavanam, i.e., (*Edaimarudhur*). It is also called Madhyarjunam, as it is centrally situated between Mallikarjunam and Sputarjunam. It is also identified as Champakaranya and Vilvavanam. The town is the residence of the descendants of Raja Amar Singh who was deposed by the British in 1798.

The temple has been in existence from time immemorial and the four famous saints - Appar, Sambandhar, Manickavasagar, and Sundarar have sung in praise of this deity.

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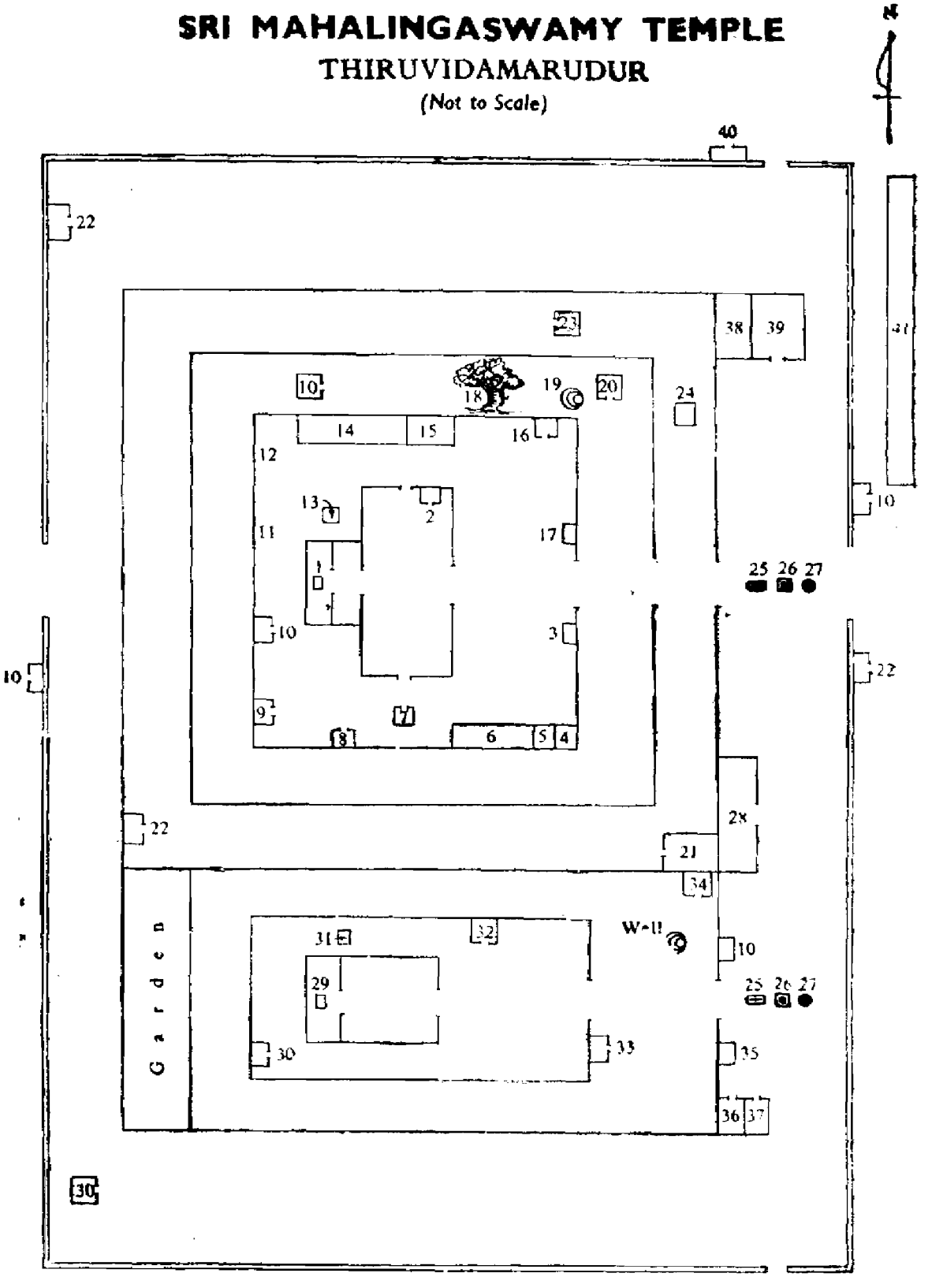
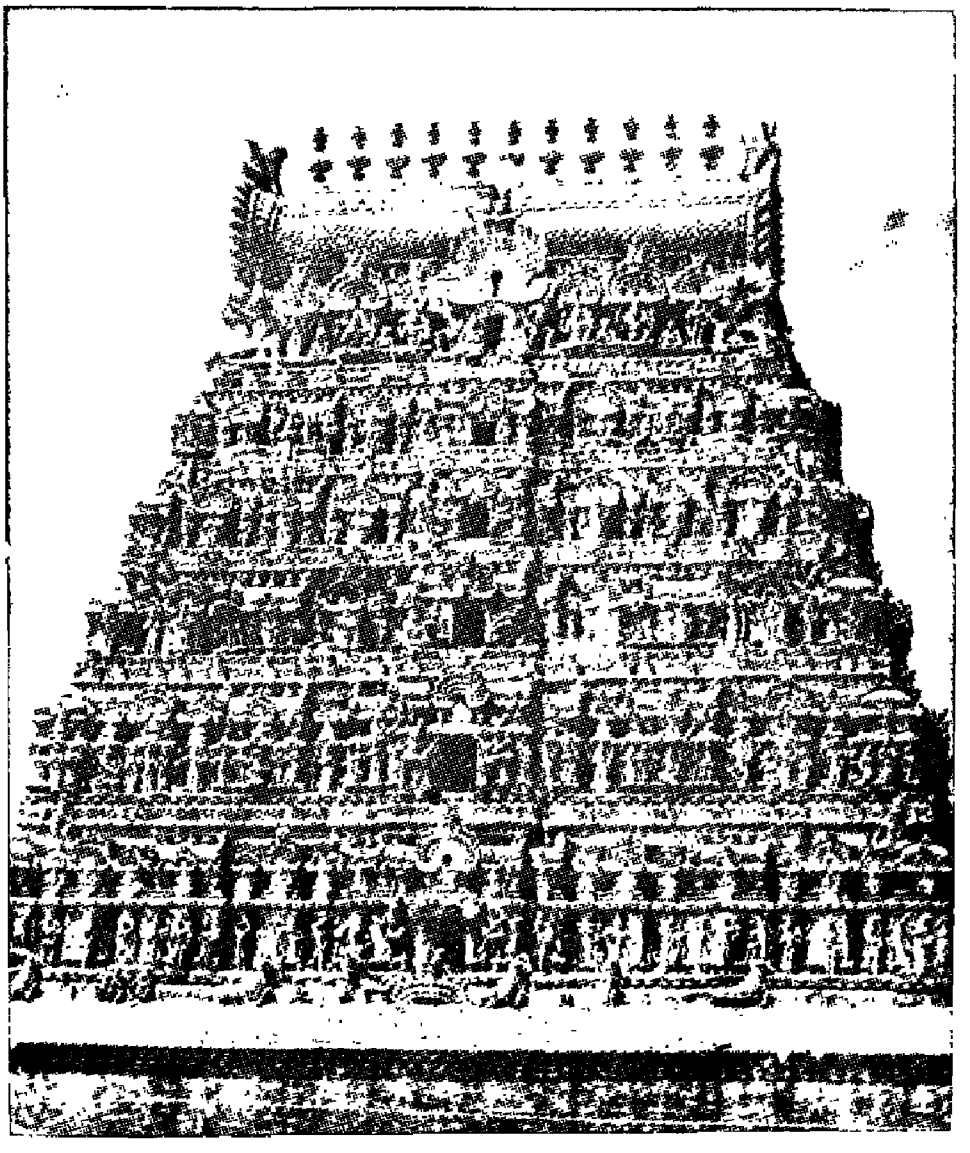
SRI MAHALINGASWAMY TEMPLE

THIRUVIDAMARUDUR

(Not to Scale)





The Eastern Gopuram of
Sri Mahalingaswamy Temple,
Thiruvidaimarudur.

King Varaguna Pandyan
Sri Mahalingaswamy Temple,
Thiruvidaimarudur.

It is said that in the early centuries, King Veerachola cleared the Marudhavanam and established the temple giving this place the name of Veeracholapuram. The river Veeracholam running north of this place establishes this fact. Sri Varaguna Pandya who visited this temple latter for worship is said to have effected major repairs and renovated the temple. It was he who is also said to have constructed the lofty tower over the western gate which is the largest of the four and also the second prakaram known as Kodumudi Prakaram wherein are displayed the various forms of Lord Siva. Achutappa Nayak, the pious ruler of Tanjore had made gifts of land to the temple. He is said to have erected the Pushyamandapam on the banks of the Cauvery.

The temple has four concentric corridors (prakarams) with the sanctum sanctorum at the centre. The outer-most prakaram is called Asvamedha Prakaram. A circumambulation (*pradakshina*) of the prakaram is believed to confer on the worshippers the fruits of having performed an Aswamedha. People who are possessed of evil spirits and are out of their wits go round this prakaram and get cured of their malady. The inner corridor, Kodumudy Prakaram confers on the worshippers the fruits of having gone round Sri Kailas. The third is called Pranava Prakaram wherein the Vedhas are said to echo.

There is a sculpture at the eastern gate, called Chola *Brahmahatti*. Legend says that this represents a Brahmin who was murdered by a Chola King and who waited at the temple gate as an avenger. The King who was inside the temple escaped on the advice of Lord Siva through another gate leaving the 'Brahmahatti' waiting for ever at the other gate.

There are several interesting inscriptions in the temple. The Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam is managing the affairs of the temple as the hereditary Trustee.

Lord Mahalinga is the presiding deity of this temple. The Lingam in the temple is one of the biggest in South India

being next in point of size only to those in the big temples at Tanjore and Gangaikonda Cholapuram.

The consort of the presiding deity is Sri Brahatsundara Kuchambikai. There is a deity by name Mookambika with '*Meru*' (Sri Chakkaram) installed adjacent to Her. The tower of this temple has a semblance of the northern style.

The temple has around it a number of Theerthams in the shape of tanks. The foremost of these is the Karunyamirtha Theertham at the entrance to the temple. It is said that on the Chitra-vishu day, the Ganges flows into this tank and a bath in this holy water confers on the devotees the benefit of having taken a bath in the Ganges. As the legend goes, Prithukirthi, who had a dip in the Holy Ganges on that day emerged out of this tank to the surprise of all.

The other Theerthams are Bana Theertham, Parasara Theertham and Soma Theertham.

The temple has got lands to the tune of 2·674 acres, both wet and dry besides fourteen houses. The annual income from these properties is estimated at Rs. 3,62,000. The antique jewellery of the temple are worth about Rs. 2,37,000. The resources of the temple are spent over the conduct of poojas and festivals according to Agamas and for maintenace and timely renovation of the temple. There is a special auditorium for religious propagation. Lectures on Saivasiddhantha are held there. Arrangements are made every year for the *Thirumurai Parayanam* by erudite scholars.

There is also a library attached to the auditorium which contains valuable books on Saivasiddhantha and Agamas and also ancient palm leaf manuscripts. Research is carried on and books on Saivasiddhantha and Agamas are published and distributed free of cost to the public on festive occasions. In addition to the propagation of Saivasiddhantha, the Adheenakartha of the Mutt has established Basic Schools and a High School with a view to impart secular education to children.

There are several silver vahanas, viz., rishabam, bandicoot, parrot, elephant, Soorya Prabhai and Chandra Prabhai. Besides there are a number of vahanas made of wood. It has a fine silver palanquin and a very large wooden car and the jewels of this temple are said to be finer than those of any other temple in the district.

A number of festivals are conducted in this temple of which Thai Poosam festival and Vaikasi Vasantha festival are said to be important ones. The festival which is held at the time of Pushyam in January every year is said to be attended by a very large number of people.

Legend has it that Ishtaroma, King of Mythila who was issueless visited this place, worshipped this deity and was blessed with a male child who was known as Prithukirthi. Sri Varaguna Pandya and Sri Hamsadwaja (a Chola King) are said to have got rid of the sin of Brahmanicide (*Brahmahatti Dosha*) by taking bath in the Veeracholam river and offering worship at the temple. Several kings and saints are said to have visited this place and worshipped at the temple.

Under the direction of Saint Agasthya, Munipungavas or great saints came to this Kshetra to worship Uma and through Her gain the blessings of the Lord. Sri Uma in the form of Mookambika is said to have worshipped the Lord and helped the Munipungavas to have a darshan of the Lord in the form of Eganayaka.

THIRUBHUVANAM

Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple

Thirubhuvanam a village with a population of 7,548 according to 1961 Census is about eight kilometres from Kumbakonam on the road to Thiruvidaimarudhur. A famous Saivite temple dedicated to Sri Kampahareswarar is in this village. It was built by Kulothunga Chola III. The place, it may be

mentioned, got the name Thirubhuvanam after this King who called himself Thirubhuvana Chakravarthi. Modelled after the Chola temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram, the temple at Thirubhuvanam is artistic, colourful and attractive. The king is said to have built this shrine as a victory memorial of his campaign in North India. He has also contributed much to the temple of Sri Airavatheeswarar at Darasuram near Kumbakonam. At present, this temple is under the control of the Dharmapura Adheenam. Thirubhuvanam is a Panchayat having a population of about 7,548.

This sacred sthalam is described as Thirubhuvana Veerapuram in the inscriptions, but nowadays, it is known as Thirubhuvanam. There are seven inscriptions here relating to the shrine. They have been copied by the Government in 1909 and 1911. One of them records the building operations of Kulothunga Chola Deva and this is engraved on the south wall of the central shrine. Another speaks about an institution being run here for the study of religion and philosophy. The temple facing east covers an area of about 5·5 acres. It has an impressive 160 feet high pagoda in the front, modelled on the gopuram of the great Tanjore temple. It is situated in the heart of the village and there are two round ways (prakarams) in addition to the one in the Garba-Graham. There are two main gateways (with gopurams) which have to be crossed to reach the sanctum sanctorum. This temple is planned and constructed corresponding to the description of Sekkizhar as to how a temple should be planned and built.

The Lord of the temple is known as Sri Kampahareswarar which means one who protects people shuddering in utter fear. It is said that Aswakreevan, Vrushaba Kreevan, Vyalakreevan, Lord Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi, Narada, Varuna, the famous kings Varaguna, Raja Raja and others had worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. The divine consort is called Sri Dharmasamvardhani. The Lingam in the sanctum sanctorum is large and is carved out of a single stone. The vimanam over the sanctum sanctorum is a massive structure and is cut out of fine stones. In Tanjore

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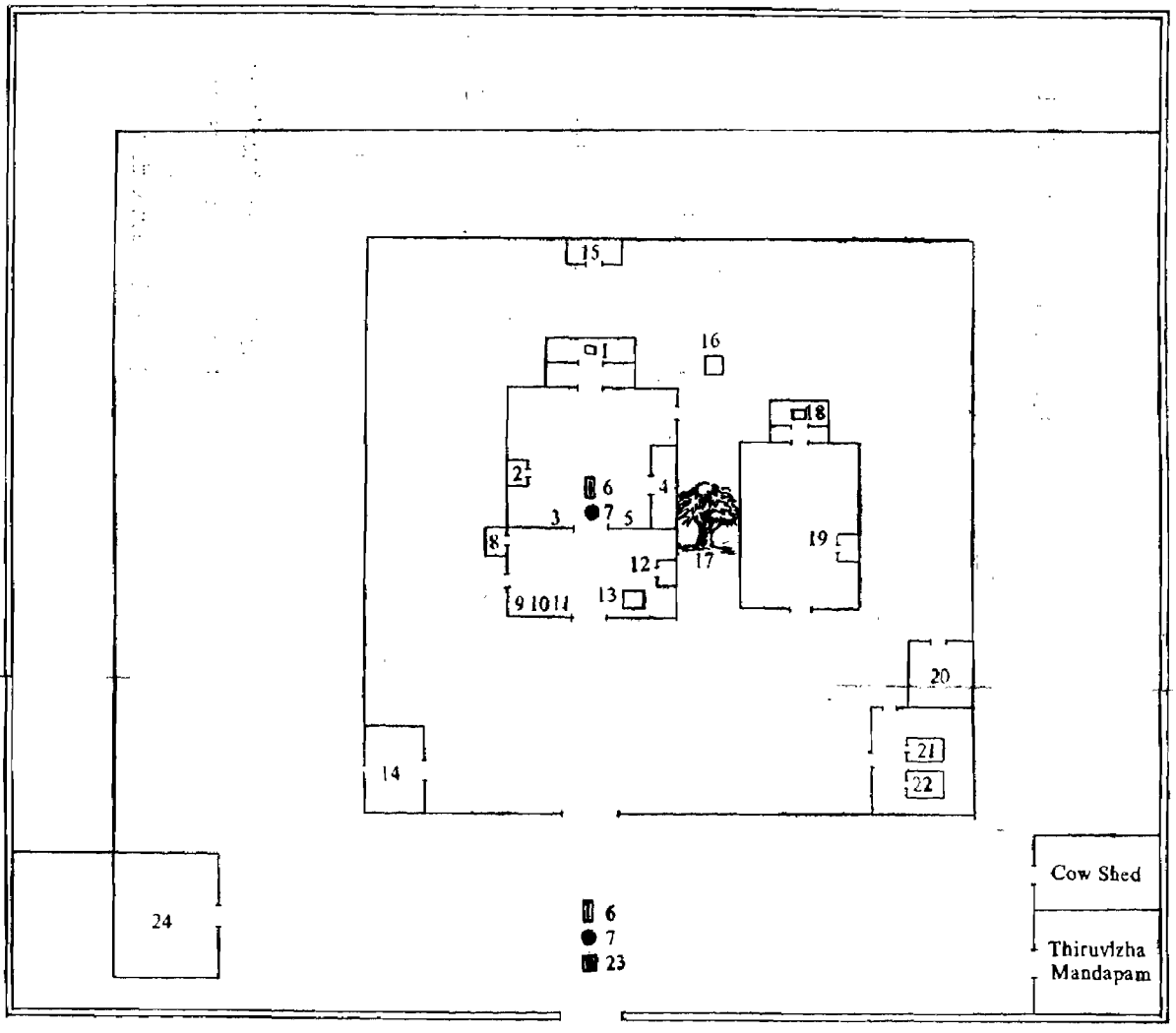
22. Sarabheswarar (Uthsavar)
23. *Dwajasthambam*
24. Devasthanam Office

SRI KAMPAHARESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

THIRUBUVANAM

(Not to Scale)



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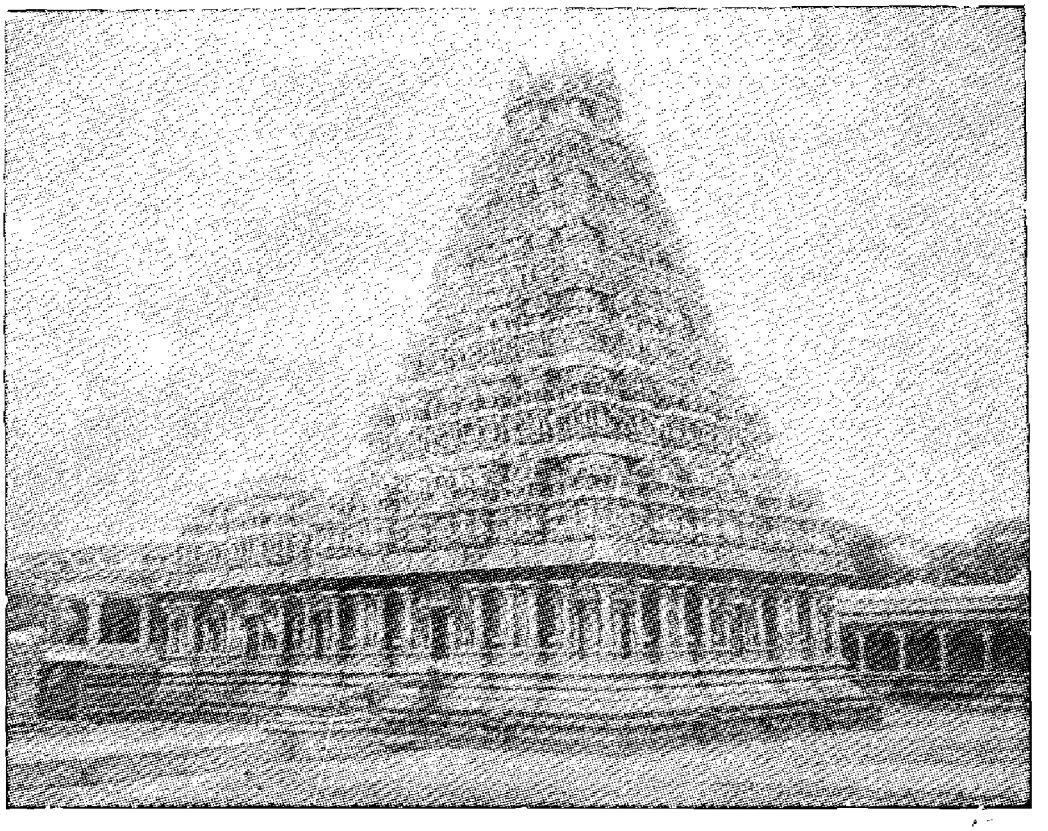
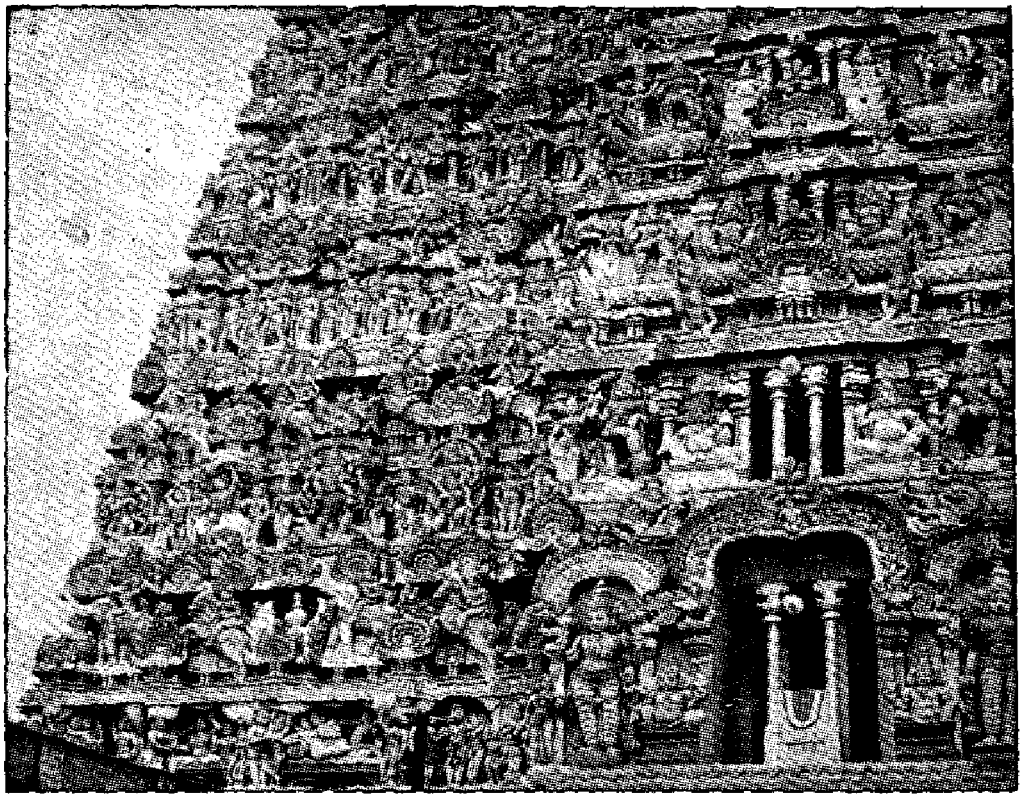
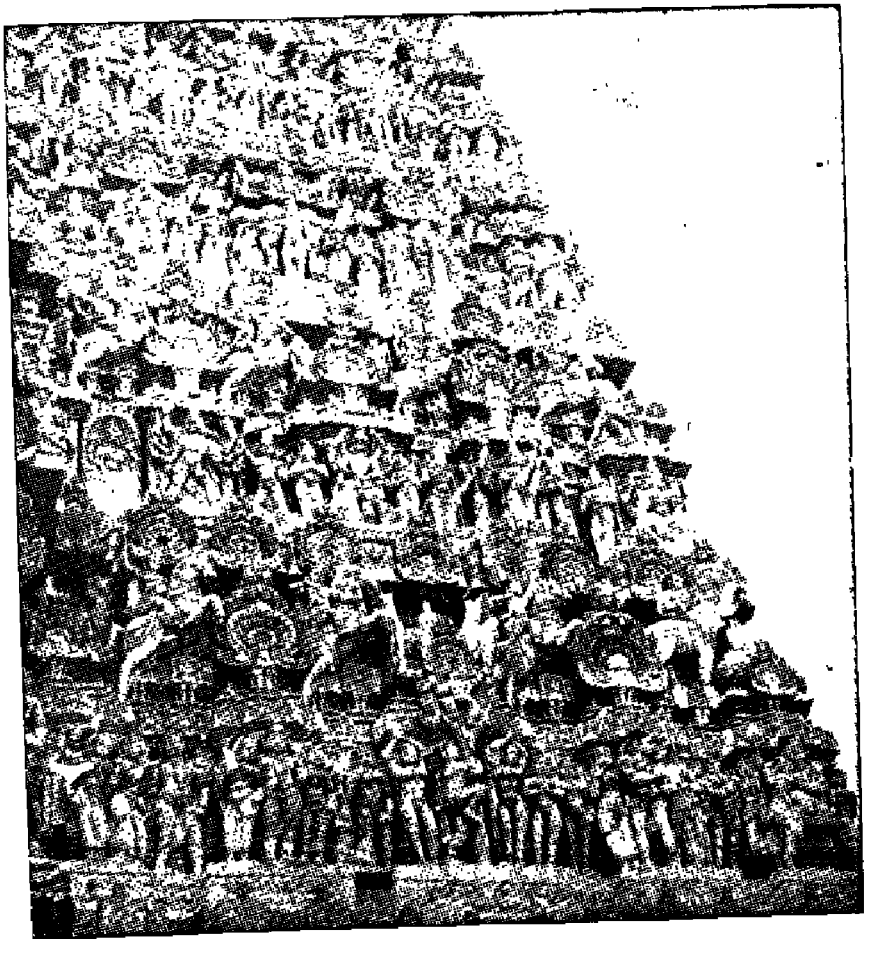


Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple Vimanam
Thirubhuvanam.

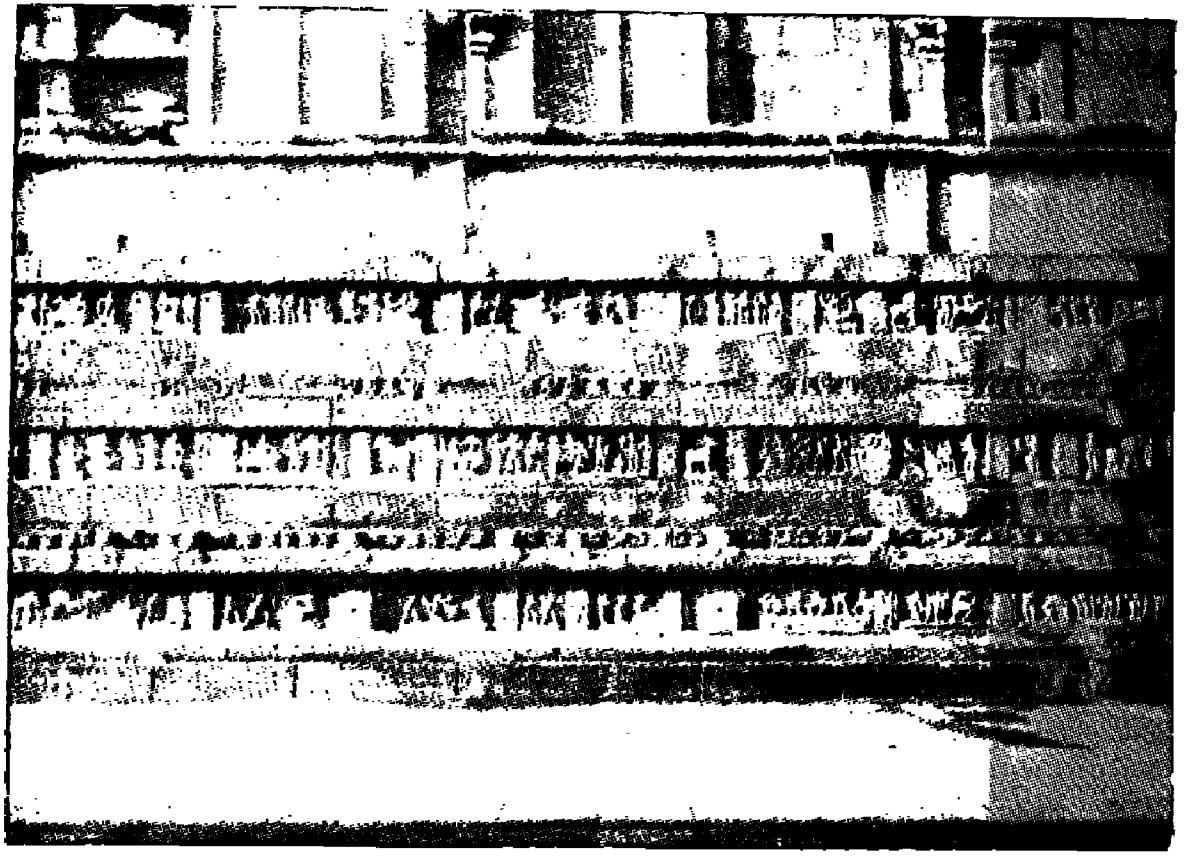


Attractive plaster figures in the Gopuram
Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple,
Thirubhuvanam.



Attractive stucco figures in the Gopuram
Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple,
Thirubhuvanam.

Attractive Stucco figures in the gopuram (another view),
Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple,
Thirubhuvanam.



Attractive Sculptures
Sri Kampahareswaraswamy Temple, Thirubhuvanam.

district which is deltaic district, devoid of hills, it is a matter of wonder how such massive stone structures were constructed. There are as many as six sacred Theerthams viz., Saraba Theertham, Deva Theertham, Gnana Theertham, Vyasa Theertham, Brigu Theertham and Siddha Theertham. The sacred Vilva Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here.

The tower is full of sculptured images relating to various episodes from Puranas and all round the temple on the sides and bottom, there are thousands of figures cut beautifully in stone. There are panels depicting episodes from Ramayana and Manunithi Chola story. There are immortal stone cut figures and one finds innumerable dance poses. Studies of elephants, yalies etc., are a speciality. The pillars inside the shrine have been carved very delicately and some are of the Pallava style. The tower of the central shrine was renovated and Kumbabishegam performed by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam in 1941. Another Kumbabishegam was performed in 1963 by the present Adheena Kartha.

The temple is noted for its beautiful shrine of Sarabha in the compound. The figure of Sarabha Murthy is an unique piece of work in art. The Uthsavamurthy in bronze is an excellent piece of art. It is taken in procession on the festival day. Metallic images of Natarajar and Bikshadanar here are also excellent exhibits of good art. Of all the bronze images here, that of Sarabha Murthy is the finest.

On either side of the Sarabhar Sannadhi, one finds two beautifully carved idols of Goddesses. Some call these Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, but these black stone images remind us the figures of Belur and Hoysala art.

Poojas are performed five times a day by non-hereditary priests according to the principles of the Karana and Kamika Agamam. The temple own modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 31,000 of which the golden Kasumalai and the costly stone studded Padhakkam of the Goddess deserve special mention. The immovable

properties of the temple comprise about 1,850 acres of wet and 750 acres of dry lands apart from thirteen houses which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,64,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are four wooden palanquins, a silver ratham, silver car and a good number of vahanas. Some are silver plated and others wooden but painted with attractive colours.

Bramothsavam during Panguni Uthiram, Karthigai Deepam, Skandha Sashti, Adi Pooram, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri and Thiruvadhirai are the regular annual festivals celebrated here. Of these, the fifteenth day Brahmothsavam during the Panguni Uthiram is the most important one which attracts thousands of devotees from far and near.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheena-kartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

Legend has it that after the *Samharam* (killing) of Hiranya, Narasimhamurthy was found still in an angry mood and those around Him could not withstand the ferocity of Narasimhamurthy. Sarabha is a unique figure being neither human nor animal. It does not conform to any living species.

For architectural importance, sculptural eminence and epigraphical signfiicance, the Kampahareswara Temple of Thirubhuvanam has been a big draw from time immemorial.

THIRUVISALUR

Sri Karkadeswaraswamy Temple

Thiruvisalur, formerly known as Vembarur lies on the northern bank of the river Cauvery. The ancient Siva temple here is dedicated to Sri Karkedeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is known as Aburvanayagi. The temple is said to have been built by Chola King. There are numerous

inscriptions mostly relating to the endowments made to the temple by Sembiyan Madeviar, Raja Raja I and others.

Thiruvisalur is a small Panchayat having a population of about 2,706 according to the 1961 Census. It is about eleven kilometres from Kumbakonam on the Kumbakonam-Kuttalam road. Buses are plying frequently from Darasuram, Veppattur, Kumbakonam and Kuttalam to this place. At Thiruvidaimarudhur which is at a distance of about eight kilometres is the nearest railway station. The temple which faces east covers an area of about 0·75 acres, It has a single prakaram and a sanctum sanctorum. Its vimanam has plaster figures on it. Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai and Arumarundhanayagi are the sub-deities here. There are also a number of festival idols for Somaskandhar, Vinayagar, Subramaniar, and others all made of panchalogam.

Poojas are performed twice a day by hereditary Brahmin priests. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 16·33 acres of wet and 4·00 acres of dry lands apart from six coconut trees which fetch an annual income of Rs. 2,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THIRUNALLUR

Sri Kalyana Sundareswaraswamy Temple

Among the one hundred and twenty-seven "*Padalpetra Sthalams*" of Lord Siva in Chola Nadu, Thirunallur is a noted one. It is at a distance of about six kilometres from Kumbakonam. It is a small Panchayat having a population of 767. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have glorified the presiding deity of the temple here in their Padhigams.

The Lord is known as Sri Kalyanasundarar, Panchavarneswar, Periyandeswarar and Soundara Nayagar.

The present temple is a modest one on an area of less than an acre. There is only one prakaram. "*Saptha Sagaram*" is the name of the sacred waters here. This old temple had been renovated as and when necessary.

Poojas are performed twice daily. The temple gets good income from the twelve acres of wet and one acre of dry lands which it owns.

Once Adishesha, the serpent Lord and Vayu the God of wind challenged each other and entered into a trial of strength. The former coiled round Mount Meru and held it fast and Vayu tried his best to lift the mountain through fierce wind. At one stage the peaks of the mouutain were blown off. One of the peaks called Sundaragiri, it is said, fell in Nallur and a Lingam came up there late. This place is, therefore, hailed as Kailas of the South. Nallur is a translation of the word Sundarapuram. There are several legends concerning Devas and Rishis who worshipped the Lord here and attained salvation.

There is a well known legend to the effect that Saint Appar who requested the presiding deity of Thiruch Chathimutram to bless him by putting the divine feet on his (saint's) head was directed by the Lord to come to Thirunallur. Accordingly the Saint came to Thirunallur and the God obliged him. The Saint describes this incident thus :

" நினைந்துருகு மடியாரை நைய வைத்தார்
நில்லாமே தீவினைக ணீங்க வைத்தார்
சினந்திருகு களிற்றுரிவைப் போர்வை வைத்தார்
செழுமதியின் தளிர் வைத்தார் சிறந்து வாழ்
ரினந்துறவி மணிமகுடத் தேறத் துற்ற
வினமலர்கள் போதவிழ்ந்து மதுவாய்ப் பில்கி
நனைந்தனைய திருவடிஎன் தலைமேல் வைத்தார்
நல்லூர் எம்பெருமானர் நல்ல வாறே"

THIRUPPURAMBAYAM

Sri Sakshinathaswamy Temple

Thiruppurambayam, an ancient village is situated on the north bank of Manniyar, eight kilometres north-west of Kumbakonam. It is a Panchayat having a population of 3,628. This place is of historical importance in that a battle was fought here in the Ninth Century. In this war, Ganga King Prithivipati I lost his life at the hands of Pandya King Varaguna. Sri Sakshinathaswamy Temple facing east is centrally located in the village. The inscriptions refer to this village as Adhitheswaram. The area of this temple is about 90·712 sq. ft. There are two prakarams in this temple. The entrance to the first prakaram was called *Thirumaligai Thiruvayil* in olden days. There is a beautiful small gopuram. In the second prakaram, there is a five storeyed gopuram, eighty one feet high.

The Goddess is known as 'Karumpadu Solli' and Her idol has been installed in a separate sanctum. But from the inscription it is seen that the God has other names such as 'Thiruppurambayamudaiya Nayanar', 'Thiruppurambayamudaiya Maha Devar, 'Thiruppurambayamudaiya Pattalakar' and 'Thiruppurambayamudaiya Thambiranar'. The Goddess is also known as *'Kuraivila Azhagi'*. In praise of this temple, the four Nayanmars and Sekkizhar had sung hymns. The presiding deity is Sakshinathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam.

Outside the Maha Mandapam there is a separate shrine for Vinayagar who is called *'Pralayam Katha Pillaiyar'*. A grand Abishegam is performed to the idol using honey on the Vinayaga Chathurthi day. There is a belief that this image absorbs the sweet fluid liberally poured. Since the God is said to have saved the village at the time of deluge, He is called 'Pralayam katha Vinayagar'.

The Brahmothsavam is celebrated for ten days during Masi month. This is the biggest festival here. There is

another festival for Vinayagar for five days in Avani. There are four poojas daily in this temple. There are two Sthala Puranams, one in Sanskrit and the other in Tamil.

The inscriptions in the shrine relate to Chola and Vijayanagar rulers. The officials of Archaeological Department had taken copies of twelve inscriptions in 1897, thirty - five in 1927 and sixteen in 1931. From the epigraphical records published, we come to know of the history of the region as well as Chola administration. It is understood that the Chola King Adhitha I had built the present temple during 870 to 907 A.D. and named this as 'Adhitheswaram'. It is also understood that Raja Raja Chola I had built a separate shrine for the Goddess during 985 to 1014 A.D. From one of the inscriptions, it is learnt that Raja Raja Chola III had ordered that the residents of Thiruppurambayam must give twenty coconuts to the temple from each tree they own.

Legend has it that a girl of Kavirippoompattinam was journeying towards Madura with her aunt's son to whom she was betrothed by her father. While both of them were halting for a night at Thiruppurambayam, a tragedy overtook them. The youth died at that spot on account of snake bite. Hearing the wail of the poor girl, the great Saint Tirugnanasambandhar who happened to pass by that side took pity on her. He prayed to the Almighty to bring the youth back to life. The Lord acceded to the request and the marriage took place in the temple itself as desired by the Lord. Later when the first wife of the youth questioned the validity of the marriage, the Lord is said to have stood witness in support of the poor girl and convinced the people. Hence the name of the Lord is *Sakshinathar* or the Lord who was a witness.

The head of the Madurai Sri Thirugnanasambandha Swamigal Adheenam is the hereditary Trustee of this temple. He has started a Thevara Padasala in this temple. In 1940 the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department had appointed an Executive Officer in consultation with the head of this Adheenam. This temple

owns about 236·60 acres of wet and dry lands, eight houses and eleven shops which fetch an annual income of Rs. 34,000. The Executive Officer is managing the day to day administration of the temple.

INNAMBUR

Sri Akshayapureeswaraswamy Temple

Innambur, a village about six kilometres from Kumbakonam is noted for its Saivite shrine which has a rich legendary background. The place is about two kilometres from Puliyanjeri which is on the Kumbakonam-Swamimalai bus route.

The presiding deity, a huge Siva Lingam is called Akshayapureeswarar. The divine consort is called Kondarpunkuzhal Ambal. Innambur is one of the eighteen sacred shrines around Kumbakonam and is a " Padal Petra Sthalam".

There is epigraphical evidence about improvements made to the temple by the Chola Kings in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Architecturally the entrance gopuram and the " Gaja prashta Vimanam " are worthy of attention. On the front side of the vimanam there are some stucco figures which are said to depict scenes from the legend associated with this temple.

An attempt to renovate the temple was made in 1936 by a devotee. Unfortunately he breathed his last even as the renovation work was in progress. The work was completed,

The present temple facing east occupies an area of about 1·82 acres. Poojas are performed four times a day.

According to the legend, long ago the affairs of the temple were managed by an ardent Saivite devotee. He was

noted for his efficient administration of the temple. Once, however, as fate would have it, he failed to maintain any account of the temple's transactions due to inadvertence. In those times the temple accounts used to be audited periodically by the Durbar and when the Royal summon was issued to the Innambur Temple Manager for the production of the accounts within a certain date, he was perplexed as he had no accounts to submit to the Durbar. The only course left before him was to pray to the Lord whom he had been worshipping with great veneration. The God who was convinced of the fidelity of his devotee sympathised with him and ordained in his dream that he should make up a bundle of plain palmyrah leaves and produce before the Durbar and that He would look to the rest.

On the appointed date when the audit work began before the Durbar, the authorities were surprised to see the unwritten leaves and grew angry at the arrogance of the Manager of the Innambur Temple. The matter was reported to the Chola King who started conducting an enquiry. At this juncture, an old man appeared on the scene and explained that it was he who recorded the accounts of the temple in question and that he could render complete accounts at that very moment. The old man read the whole accounts from the unwritten leaves and suddenly disappeared. Presently the king came to know the truth that the old man was none other than the Lord Himself. The king craved pardon from the Innambur Temple Manager and then sent him back to his place with all royal honours. The king also ordered that no accounts of this temple need at all be maintained thereafter.

There is a Board of Trustees consisting of three members who now mange the temple.

ERAHARAM

Sri Skandhanathaswamy Temple

Eraharam is situated at a distance of eight kilometres from Kumbakonam railway station. It is connected with Kumbakonam by bus. It is a small village with a population of 647.

The temple is an ancient one and is claimed to have been constructed by Chola Kings. It occupies roughly an area of thirty-three cents. It is constructed in the conventional type with two prakarams and a gopuram in front. The presiding deity is Skandanathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. His consort is known as Sankaranayaki Amman.

Besides the presiding deities, there are other deities as well, namely Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Durgai Amman. There are no festival deities.

The jewels of this temple are worth about Rs. 1,000. There are six acres of wet and one acre of dry lands which are leased out. The approximate income of the temple is estimated at Rs. 1,034. This amount is utilised for the day to day administration of the temple.

Two poojas are performed every day. The festivals conducted in this temple are Navarathri in Purattasi month and Sivarathri in Masi month. In the prakaram of the Lord's shrine, there are some inscriptions.

It is believed that before He went to quell the demon Suran, Lord Swaminatha was blessed by the Goddess of this place who is none other than the divine Mother, Parvathi. He also obtained from Her the spear called "Sakthivel" for Surasamharam.

It is said that once a demon who was cursed to become a bear on account of his misbehaviour with a sage, came to this place and attained bliss after worshipping the Lord of this place. It is also said that a dip in the holy waters near the temple will cure one of any disease he suffers from.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Board of Trustees for looking after the affairs of the temple.

KORANADU KARUPPUR

Sri Sundareswaraswamy Temple

The Thirukkudanthai Puranam which deals with the greatness of Kudanthai or Kumbakonam as it is called refers to Pancha Krosa Sthalams or five sacred places around it which are within a radius of little over three kilometres. (*Krosa* means 2·25 miles). Karuppur or Kora Nadu Karuppur is one of these sacred places. The other four are: Thiruvidaimarudhur, Thirunageswaram, Thareswaram and Swamimalai. From the Kumbakonam railway station, Karuppur, a village with a population of 4,698 is at a distance of about six kilometres.

The temple is dedicated to Sri Sundareswaraswamy. This east facing shrine occupies an area of about an acre and three cents. The front gopuram is a five-tiered one. As one crosses the gopuram entrance, there are shrines of Vinayagar and Lord Muruga. The God's shrine faces east and the shrine of Goddess Abirami Amman is facing south. There are two prakarams in the temple. The other deities in the temple are : Murugan, Lakshmi, Saptha Madhar, Natarajar, Mariamman and Navagrahas. Padhiri is the Sthala Viruksham here.

The walls and mandapams in this old temple have been renovated from time to time. The temple can rightly be proud of a few icons of artistic beauty. Dwara Palaghar, Saptha Madhar and Durgai Amman have been beautifully made. There is an idol of Nandhi made out of copper. The two beautiful lamps called Pavai Vilakku in the Amman Sannadhi date back to Chola days. The Lord's sanctum is a little elevated.

Poojas are performed four times daily. Many pious individuals have contributed for the performance of poojas through Kattalais. Special worship is made during Navarathri, Thiruvadhirai, Panguni Uthiram and Karthigai Somavaram. The temple owns about ninety-three acres of lands through which it gets about Rs. 13,000 annually.

It is said that a pilgrim to Kumbakonam should have sacred bath in Mahamaham Tank and then worship the Lord in each of the Pancha Krosa Sthalams. Karuppur is well known for Karuppur Kali. This deity is kept in a wooden box and worshipped. The box is in the Maha Mandapam of the Lord's shrine. In the Tamil month of Chithirai, a big festival is held in honour of this deity. Thousands of people gather here to witness this festival. Outside the temple on the eastern side is the sacred water called Brahma Theertham. A little away from this there is a shrine for Lord Venkatesa Perumal under a Punnai Tree. This is a sub-temple of Sri Sundareswar temple.

The temple which comes under the purview of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of three members.

THIRUNAGESWARAM

Sri Nageswaraswamy Temple

This is situated five kilometres east of Kumbakonam. It is a small town having a population of 8,254. There is a railway station at Thirunageswaram. The place is one of the famous sacred Saivite centres sung by Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundarar.

The village is named after the temple of Nageswara built by Gandaraditya, son of Paranthaka Chola I and husband of the famous Queen Sembiyan Madeviyar.

The area occupied by the temple is about fifteen acres. The existence of Jain images around the shrine of Goddess would show that the temple was originally built by Jains. Inscriptions show that when the irrigation channel of the village was damaged in the floods of the Cauvery in 1052, it was repaired by the village assembly with 100 kasus offered by a Vikramasingh Pallavaroyar of Marudham and that the worship

of the temple was carried on with the help of an annual grain tax on the ryots. It is said that extensive renovations were carried out in 1929 by one Sri Annamalai Chettiar of Arimalam. The front gopuram is about sixty feet tall. The inner prakaram of the temple has some interesting sculptures.

The presiding deity is Sri Nageswarar. His consort is known as Girigujambigai. The shrines of Lakshmi and Saraswathi are also installed close to the Goddess.

It is said that Goddess Parvathi did penance in this place and Lord Siva appeared before Her and granted Her prayers. Saint Sekkizhar was very much devoted to the Lord of this place. There is a mandapam said to have been constructed by Sekkizhar. There is also another mandapam constructed by Govinda Dikshithar who had carried out renovations to this temple during the reign of Raghunatha Nayak. The temple has an idol of Sekkizhar. It is said that a bath in the holy waters of this temple which is known as 'Soola Theertham' cures one of any disease one suffers from and gives all prosperity.

Five poojas are performed every day. The jewels of the temple are worth about Rs. 18,000. Most of the jewels are modern and are said to have been made out of the temple funds.

There are 344 acres of both wet and dry lands. These lands have been leased out and the amount derived about Rs. 22,000 is utilised for the general maintenance of the temple and the conduct of festivals.

There are about twenty vahanas of which two are silver rishabams. The important among them are horse, elephant, bhootham, swan, lion, serpent and peacock.

Several festivals are conducted in this temple of which the Brahmothsavam conducted in the month of Karthigai is important. The temple has a number of inscriptions.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have

appointed an Executive Officer to look after the day-to-day administration of the temple besides a Board of Trustees.

THIRUNEELAKKUDI

Sri Manogyanathaswamy Temple

Thiruneelakkudi is noted for its famous Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Manogyanathar who is a Swayambu Lingam here. His divine consort is called Amudhakujhambal or Barthapeeshta Nayagi. This reputed temple is included among the " Padal Petra Sthalams " and belongs to the Thiruvaduthurai Mutt. Saint Appar had visited this ancient shrine, worshipped the Lord here and sung a sacred " Padhigam " in praise of Him.

Thiruneelakkudi is a small Panchayat having a population of about 986. It is situated at a distance of about thirteen kilometres from Kumbakonam on the Kumbakonam—Karaikal road. It is a mile and a half to the south of the Aduthurai railway station. It is also linked with several sacred centres by both bus and train. There are several stone inscriptions here which show that the temple should have been in existence for long.

The temple which covers an area of about an acre has two prakarams and two sancta apart from two beautiful vimanams with plaster figures on them. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the Lingam which is about two feet in height with its rough surface studded with square projections.

Poojas are performed four times a day. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 3,000 of which the costly silver Nagabaranam of the Lord deserves special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about fifty-five acres of both wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 9,500 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. There is an

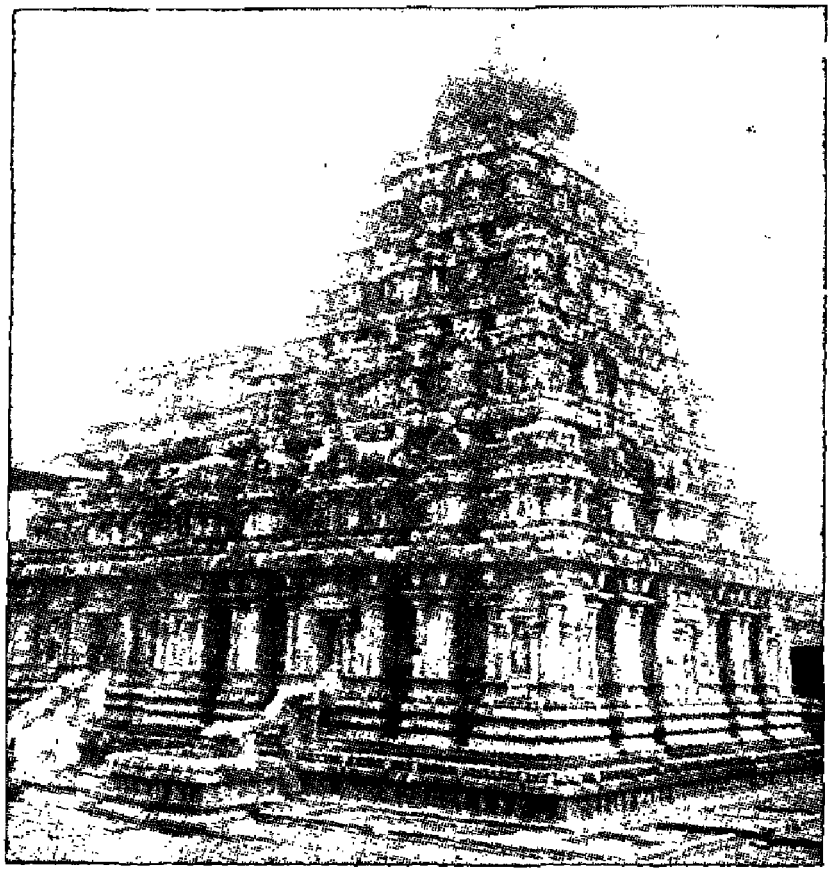
ancient palanquin here apart from an elephant, a rishabam and a peacock vahanam, all made of wood.

The famous Chaithrothsavam in commemoration of Sri Markandeya during the Tamil month of Chithirai (April-May) is the chief festival celebrated here. The *Saptha Sthanam* festival is held at this time. During this festival, the palanquin bearing the presiding deity passes through the Saptha Sthanams (seven shrines) of Vittalur, Elandurai, Eradimangalam, Thirunageswaram, Thirubhuvanam, Thiruvidaimarudhur and Irawadhapuram. This festival has now been temporarily suspended for want of funds.

An article which appeared in "The Hindu" on 7th June 1942 describes this festival thus :

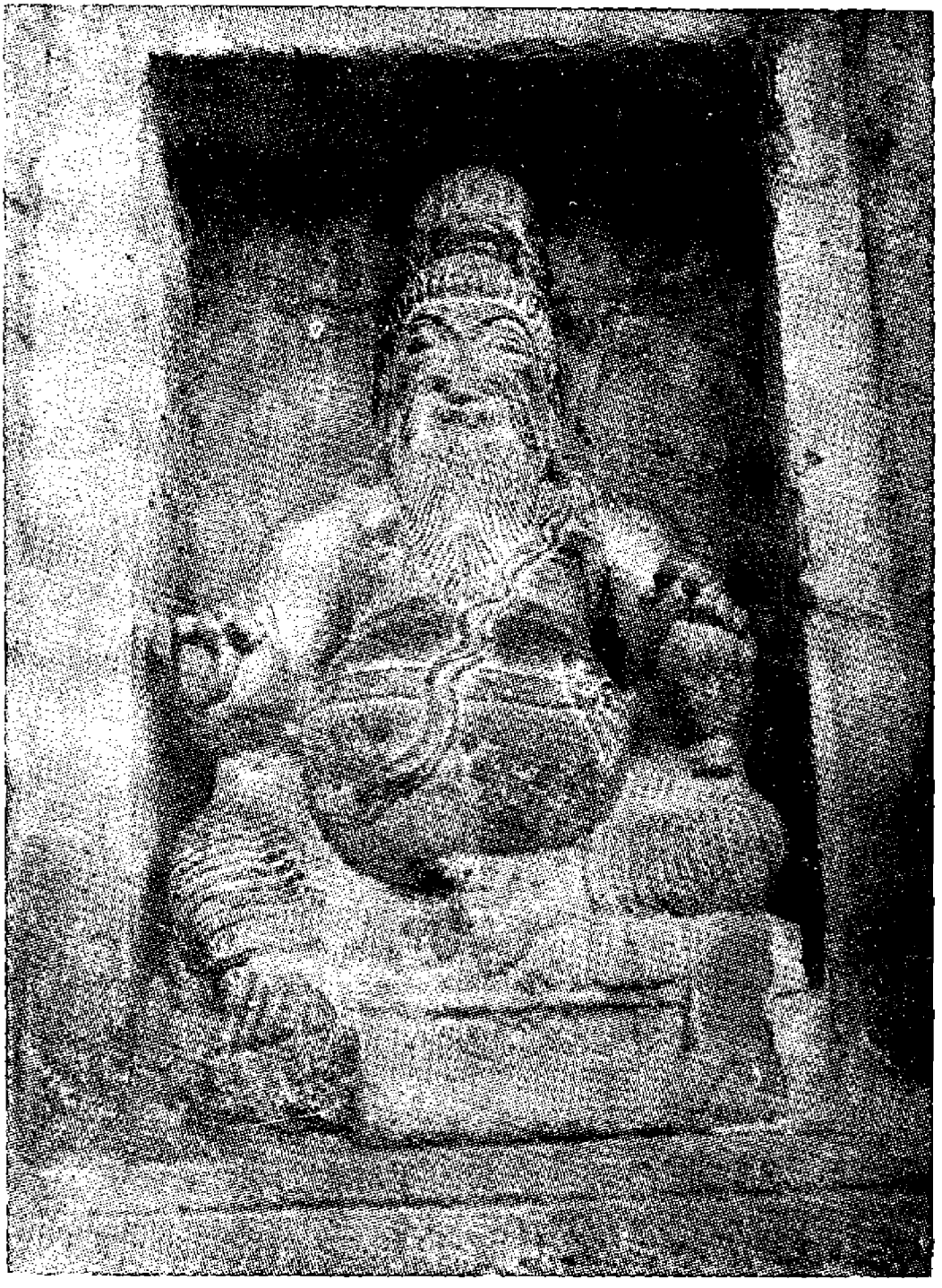
"During the festival month, the abishegam of the deity includes a custom that still baffles peoples' minds. There is a huge stone oil mill standing nearly five feet high on the north-eastern corner of the temple. During the celebrations every day for all the four kalams of worship, about twelve Madras measures of well cleaned white gingelly seed are fed into the stone mill and the oil extracted. The oil is for anointing the Lingam. For this anointment, the mouth of the Gomuki is blocked and the whole amount of the oil from the mill is poured into it. Two priests stand opposite to each other and cupping their hands, fill them with the oil from the Gomuki reservoir and pat it gently on the Lingam. The oil is absorbed mysteriously and at the end of the process, the Lingam appears to be just as it was at the commencement of the ceremony. When one pauses to reflect that this apparently incredible phenomenon happens at least four times every day during the whole season and that inquisitive people have examined in vain every inch of the Lingam with a magnifying glass to discover a minute crack or any other leak, it will have to be concluded that the answer is outside the realm of mundane phenomena".

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary trustee of the temple.



Sri Airavatheeswaraswamy Temple Vimanam
Darasuram.

Ravananugrahamurthi
Airavatheeswaraswamy Temple,
Darasuram.



Sage Agasthya
Sri Airavatheeswaraswamy Temple,
Darasuram.

DARASURAM

Sri Airavatheeswarar Temple

Darasuram, situated very close to Kumbakonam has several ancient temples of which the temple of Airavatheeswarar is a typical example of the grandeur of Chola architecture. It is one of the eighteen major temples in and around Kumbakonam. Its population according to 1961 Census is about 4,165.

The temple was built by Raja Raja II (A.D. 1146-1163) with great piety and was enthusiastically renovated by Kulothunga III (A.D. 1178-1216) who built Thirubhuvanam.

The name " Darasuram " is said to be corruption of Rajarajeswaram. The deity is Airavatheeswarar. According to a legend, Airavatha, the elephant of Indra regained its original colour after a bath in the sacred waters.

The extensive temple tank Yama-Theertham is another link with its past. It is traditionally believed that the waters gushed forth in this tank as Siva's trident was cast for Yama to bathe in and get cured of a curse by sage Durvasa.

The temple is of special interest to the student of Saiva traditions. The north, west and south walls of the main shrine contain sculptures, representing scenes from the lives of great devotees of Siva referred to in " *Thiru-thondath-thogai* ". Forty-two of these in stone bear labels in Tamil characters, cut in stone.

The counterpart shrine of the Goddess is detached and situated adjacent to the north. The front mandapam and the sanctum at its further west abound in interesting sculptures. The whole building is seemingly borne on a float.

The two shrines together exemplify the middle period of the development of architecture in the south, " marking the stage of transition between the affluent maturity of the Cholas and the exquisite though extravagant, productions of

Vijayanagar". Today the temple is in a state of disrepair. Many of the sculptures have been removed to the Tanjore Art Gallery.

VELLALARKOIL

Sri Dharmapureeswaraswamy Temple

Vellalarkoil is about eight kilometres from Kumbakonam and two kilometres from Darasuram. The nearest railway station is Darasuram. It is understood that Sri Dharmapureeswaraswamy Temple was built during the Chola reign. The temple has been renovated a few years ago with Government aid. Vellalarkoil has a population of 1,692 according to the 1961 Census.

The presiding deity is called Sri Dharmapureeswarar and the Goddess, Kamalanayaki. The temple faces west. The plinth area of the temple is about thirty-seven cents. It has one prakaram. The Gopuram of the temple reveals the beauty of Chola architecture. The Sivalingam in this temple is large. There is no separate Sthala Puranam for this temple. But there is a reference about this in the Sthala Puranam of Sri Somanathar Temple of Pazhayarai.

It is said that Thirugnanasambandhar visited this temple and Appar sang in praise of Pazhayarai and in that he had mentioned about this temple also. There are two poojas daily.

The temple owns only about three acres of wet and dry lands and a coconut grove. The temple is getting only about Rs. 1,000 from the above lands. Panchayatdars were managing the temple in the olden days and at present the three Trustees and the Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing this temple.

THIRUKKALAYANALLUR
(SAKKOTTAI)

Sri Amirthakalasanathar Temple

The temple of Sri Amirthakalasanathar is situated at Thirukkalayanallur, a suburb of Kumbakonam and is at about three kilometres from the Kumbakonam railway station. The population of this Panchayat according to the 1961 Census is 1,809. The temple is said to have existed for long and its origin is traced to the Chola period. Spread over an area of 300 sq. ft. the shrine has a tower, two sancta, and a prakaram. The Lingam here is an installed one. Sri Sundarar has immortalised this sacred place in one of his hymns.

The God is known as Sri Amirthakalasanathar and His consort Amirthavalli. The deity here is said to have been ardently worshipped by Chola Kings. Only two poojas are performed here daily in the morning and evening. The poojas are performed by a hereditary priest, who is paid out of the temple funds.

Silver ornaments in the temple are worth Rs. 400. The Lord's worship is said to give to the devotee as much satisfaction and solace as Amirtha or nectar and hence the name of the deity is Amirthakalasanathar. The temple derives an income of about Rs. 2,500 a year by the lease of lands and buildings owned by it. About twenty-five acres of lands and a few buildings are in the name of the temple.

Except the "Saptha sthanam" day coming in April-May, there is no big festival in this temple. On this day in the Tamil month of Chithirai, the deity is taken in procession. The temple is now administered by a single Trustee and is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KARKUDI

H/O. MARUDHANALLUR

Sri Karkudinathaswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of about eight kilometres from Kumbakonam, Karkudi is one of the famous Saivite centres sung by Saint Gnanasambandhar. It is linked by bus and train. Its population according to the 1961 Census is 1,749. The ancient Siva temple here dedicated to Sri Karkudinathar is said to have been built during the period of the famous Chola Kings. Legend has it that Sri Rama had offered worship to the Lord here.

The temple which covers an area of about 0·69 acre has a seventy feet high beautiful front gopuram with plaster figures on it. There are two prakarams and two sancta here. The presiding deity in the temple is Sri Karkudinathar who is popularly known as Sarguna Lingeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is called Sri Sarvalangara Meenambigai.

Poojas are performed twice daily according to the principles of the Siva Agamam. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about an acre of wet and 3·50 acres of dry lands apart from a vacant plot and a coconut grove which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 700 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. Of all the festivals celebrated, Maha Sivarathri in Masi (February-March) and Karthigai Somavaram are the major ones.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a single Trustee, both appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUNARAIYUR

Sri Siddhanathaswamy Temple

About eight kilometres south-east of Kumbakonam town is the village of Thirunaraiyur celebrated in the Thevaram hymns. This place is referred to as Tirunaraiyur Siddheswaram to distinguish it from the nearby Nachiyarkoil which is also called Thirunaraiyur.

The presiding deity is Siddhanathar, a Swayambu Lingam. The Lord of this place is also known as Vedha Lingam as the Vedhas are supposed to have worshipped the deity. It is seen from the inscriptions in the temple that the God is known as Siddheswaramudaiyar, Gangala Devar and Siddeswaramudaiya Mahadevar. The divine consort is known as Soundaranayagi known in Tamil as Azhagammai.

The correct age of the temple is not known. But from the number of inscriptions on the walls of the temple, it is evident that it was in existence even during the Chola period. This inscriptions throw light on some aspects of Chola administration and the endowments made by the rulers of the region to the temple.

The temple occupies an area of a little more than an acre. It has two prakarams and an imposing front gopuram with five storeys. The idols of Kala Bairavar, Somaskandhar, Vinayagar, Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar and Navagrahas have been installed in the first prakaram while in the outer prakaram Vahana Mandapam, Mani Mandapam and the Vinayagar Temple have been constructed. There are also several festival idols of which that of Natarajar deserves mention. It has been so skilfully made that the waist cloth of Natarajar is shown as fluttering in the air as the Lord dances gaily. It is said that the sanctum sanctorum has been so designed that the rays of the sun fall on the Moolavar Lingam for three days in Avani and three days in Masi months. This is supposed to signify the worship of the Lord by Sun.

There are two holy waters in the temple. They are Soola Theertham and Brahma Theertham. It is said that Soola Theertham which is situated to the north of the temple was created by Lord Siva who is supposed to have dug the earth with his 'Soolam' (spear) and let out the water from his head (*Jadai*). As the water from Lord Siva's head was collected in this tank, it is also known as 'Jada Theertham'. The other Theertham is named after Brahma. It is said that a bath in these waters will give the devotees all prosperity.

There are several legends connected with this place, the deity and the holy waters.

Four poojas are performed every day. There are Rs. 19,000 worth of jewels. There are also wet and dry lands, the annual income of which is estimated at about Rs. 12,000. Bsides, the temple is getting a 'Mohini grant' of Rs. 207 from the Government. The income is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple besides conduct of periodical festivals.

The important festivals of the temple are Brahmothsavam in the month of Panguni, Arudra Darshan in Margazhi month, Navarathri in Purattasi month, Skanda Sashti in Ayppasi month, Karthigai Deepam festival in Karthigai month and Vinayaga Chathurthi in Avani month.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed an Executive Officer to look after the day-to-day administration of the temple. There is also a Board of Trustees.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are represented in the temple :

Raja Raja I (985-1014 A.D.)
Rajendra 1 (1012-1144 A.D.)
Rajadhi Raja I (1018-1054 A.D.)

Veera Rajendra I (1053-1070 A.D.)

Kulothunga I (1070)

Vikrama (1118-1120 A.D.)

Raja Raja II (1146-1163 A.D.)

VILLAGE : The village is called Thirunaraiyur. In the reign of Raja Raja I, Thirunaraiyur is said to be in Thirunaraiyur Nadu, a sub-division of Kshatriyasikhamani Vala Nadu. In the reigns of Kulothunga I and Vikramachola, the village is called Thirunaraiyur alias Panchavan Madevi Chaturvedimangalam in Thirunaraiyur Nadu, a sub-division of Kulothungachola Vala Nadu.

THE DEITY: The main deity is called Siddhesvaramudaiya Mahadeva and Siddesvaramudaiyar.

STRUCTURES : The main temple should have come into existence before the second year Raja Raja I (986 A.D.). The mandapam in front of the shrine should also be assigned to the same period as it carries inscriptions of Vira Rajendra and other Chola Kings.

GIFTS : This temple received the beneficence of the pious Chola Queen Parantakan Madevi Adigalar alias Sembiyan Madeviyar, the Queen of Gandaraditya Chola and the mother of Uthamachola. She gifted silver vessels and a chouri of gold to the temple. She also gifted lands to the temple for offerings. An image of Kamkaladeva, probably a copper image is referred to in the epigraphs of Raja Raja I. Money and sheep were gifted for offerings and lamps to the temple in the reign of Rajendra I.

A temple of Arumolideva Isvaram at Palaiyur is mentioned in the reign of the Raja Raja I which was probably built after his name. An inscription of Vikramachola refers to the shrine of a Pidari at Thirunaraiyur.

NACHIYARKOIL

Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

Situated at a distance of about nine kilometres south-east of Kumbakonam on the Kumbakonam Thiruvarur road, Thirunaraiyur which is popularly called Nachiyarkoil is noted for its reputed Vaishnavite shrine, dedicated to Sri Srinivasa Perumal. It is a large village with a population of 4,350. It is one of the 108 famous sacred centres of Lord Vishnu (*"Nootrettu Thiru pathigal"*). The divine consort here is known as Sri Nachiyar and Vanjulavalli Thayar. The place, it may be mentioned, got the name Nachiyarkoil after the divine Goddess of this shrine. The chief feature of the temple is a Garuda Vahanam, made of stone, a rare feature which cannot be found anywhere. This sacred Vaishnava Sthalam has been made famous by the songs of the Vaishnavite Saint, Thirumangai Alwar. It was also the birth place of *Sri Nambi Andar Nambi*, the compiler of the Thevaram hymns and a contemporary of Raja Raja I. The temple attracts thousands of devotees especially during the famous Mukkodi Uthsavam which is celebrated with eclat in the month of Margazhi (December-January).

The temple which covers an area of about 4·56 acres has a seventy-five feet height beautiful front gopuram with plaster figures on it. There are five broad prakarams and eighteen artistically carved granite pillars. Renovations to this shrine were made by the Chola King Kochchengannan. The latest Kumbabishegam performed was in 1960. The presiding deity Sri Srinivasa Perumal is represented by a granite vigraham, eight feet height in a standing posture. The idol of His divine consort, Sri Vanjulavalli Thayar is about six feet high. There are several Uthsava vigrahams for Perumal, Nachiyar, Santhana Krishnan and others, all made of Panchalogam. Sri Thirumangai Alwar had visited this shrine and composed about one hundred Mangala Sasanams in praise of the Lord.

Poojas are performed six times a day according to the principles of the Vaikanasa Agamam. The ornaments of the

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1. Vasudevaperumal
2. Vanjulavalli, Santhanakrishnan, Brahma etc.
3. Srinivasaperumal (Uthsavar)
4. Pakshiraja Vahanam
5. Yoga Narasimhar
6. Veera Hanuman
7. Bhuvarahar & Lakshmi
8. Desikar
9. Madapalli
10. Anjali Hanuman
11. Sthalaviruksham
12. Chakkarapaniswamy
13. Ramar, Sita, Lakshmanar & Hanumar
14. Nammazhwar
15. Vasantha Mandapam
16. Thiruvenkadamudaiyan
17. Devasthanam Office

temple in gold, silver and diamonds are worth over Rs. 1,65,000. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 334.87 acres of wet and 57.12 acres of dry lands, six shops, ten houses, one hundred and twenty two coconut trees and a few vacant plots which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 81,500 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. The hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 150 per annum. The temple owns a big Ther (car), a ratham, a silver palanquin and a wooden palanquin. Besides these, the temple is also maintaining a wonderful collection of both silver and wooden mounts.

Thirukkalyanam in Avani, Margazhi Mukkodi Uthsavam, Panguni Brahmothsavam, Navarathri, Vasanthothsavam, Vaikunta Ekadhasi, Karthigai Deepam and Sri Krishna Jayanthi are the regular annual festivals celebrated here. Of these, the nine-day Mukkodi Uthsavam in the month of Margazhi (December-January) is the most important one when about 3,000 devotees from far and near congregate. The main feature of this festival is the Garuda Sevai on the fourth day during which the stone idol of Garuda (Sri Pakshirajaswamy) is taken out in procession with the presiding deity of the temple Sri Srinivasaperumal on its shoulders. The idol of Sri Pakshirajaswamy (Garuda) is made of a single stone, eight feet high and 5 × 5 feet at the base. In all South Indian shrines, the presiding deity is of stone while the Uthsavamurthy is a metal image. But here, the stone image of Pakshiraja itself is the festival idol. When the idol is first raised from its peetam (*Aasthanam*) four people only do this job, but when it is carried in procession, nearly sixty people do it. In every Vaishnavite temple, the Garuda Vahanam is generally made of wood coated with silver or gold foil. This idol is a rare specimen. The priests and other old inhabitants of this place say that this is the only place in India where a stone Garuda exists and is taken out in procession.

Legend has it that once a sage by name Medhavi Maharishi had performed a severe penance here and pleased at his penance, the Lord and Goddess gave him darshan in their wedding dress. The sage also attained salvation. Lord

Brahma is said to be worshipping the Lord permanently here. His beautiful idol is found on the right side of Sri Srinivasa Perumal. The stone Garudan here is hailed to be a rare specimen. The Sthala Puranam of the temple has the following legend about it.

The tank Manimuktha Nadhi beside the temple was once a river running on the northern side. Garuda with a Kreetam was searching for a deity to whom the Kreetam would fit. While he was flying over this river, the Kreetam accidentally fell into the river and Garuda laid two dams on either side of the spot where it fell and began to search for it. At last he found it out and on entering the temple, he placed the Kreetam on Sri Srinivasa Perumal. The Kreetam fitted the Lord exactly. Ever since Sri Pakshiraja (Garuda) has remained in front of Him and the only boon he wanted was that Srinivasa Perumal should ride over him every year. Pakshirajaswamy here is not regarded as a mere vahanas like the horse, elephant etc. He is regarded as an important deity and poojas are offered to Him thrice daily.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUPPANTHURAI

Sri Pranaveswaraswamy Temple

Thiruppanthurai about ten kilometres from Kumbakonam is on Nachiyarkoil—Poonthottam road. It is a small village with a population of about 786. Sri Pranaveswaraswamy Temple is an ancient one. The temple authorities are not able to give the exact date of construction of the temple. The plinth area of this temple is about 33 cents. The temple has massive walls around. Besides the Garba Graha, there are

Artha mandapam, Maha mandapam and Navagraha mandapam. The presiding deity is Sri Pranaveswaraswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The Goddess is called Mangalambigai.

There is a belief that Sri Subramaniar worshipped Siva here to get rid of the curse arising out of his questioning His father (Siva) about the meaning of Pranavam (OM). Hence he was called Pranaveswaraswamy. Lord Siva called Parvathi as Mangalambigai in appreciation of Her penance.

Some old jewels like Kreetam and Ottiyanam are available for Amman. There is no Brahmothsavam. Some festivals like Amuthu Padayal in Chithrai month, Navarathri, Annabishegam in Karthigai month and Thiruvadhirai are celebrated.

There is no Executive Officer for this temple. A single Trustee is managing the temple under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KIZHAPAZHAYARAI

Sri Somanathaswamy Temple

Pazhayarai is a small village with a population of 835 about five kilometres south of Darasuram railway station. Around this village, there are other sacred places like Patteeswaram, Thiruchathimutram etc.

This historic place which was the Chola capital for some time has a temple dedicated to Sri Somanathaswami, said to have been built by Raja Raja I. The temple is also referred to as Arumolideva Iswaran temple. Once this Pazhayarai was a big city. In the Seventh Century, it was called Pazhayarai, in the Eighth Century Nandhipuram, in the Eleventh Century Mudikondacholapuram and in the Twelfth Century it changed into Raja Rajapuram. In those days, the

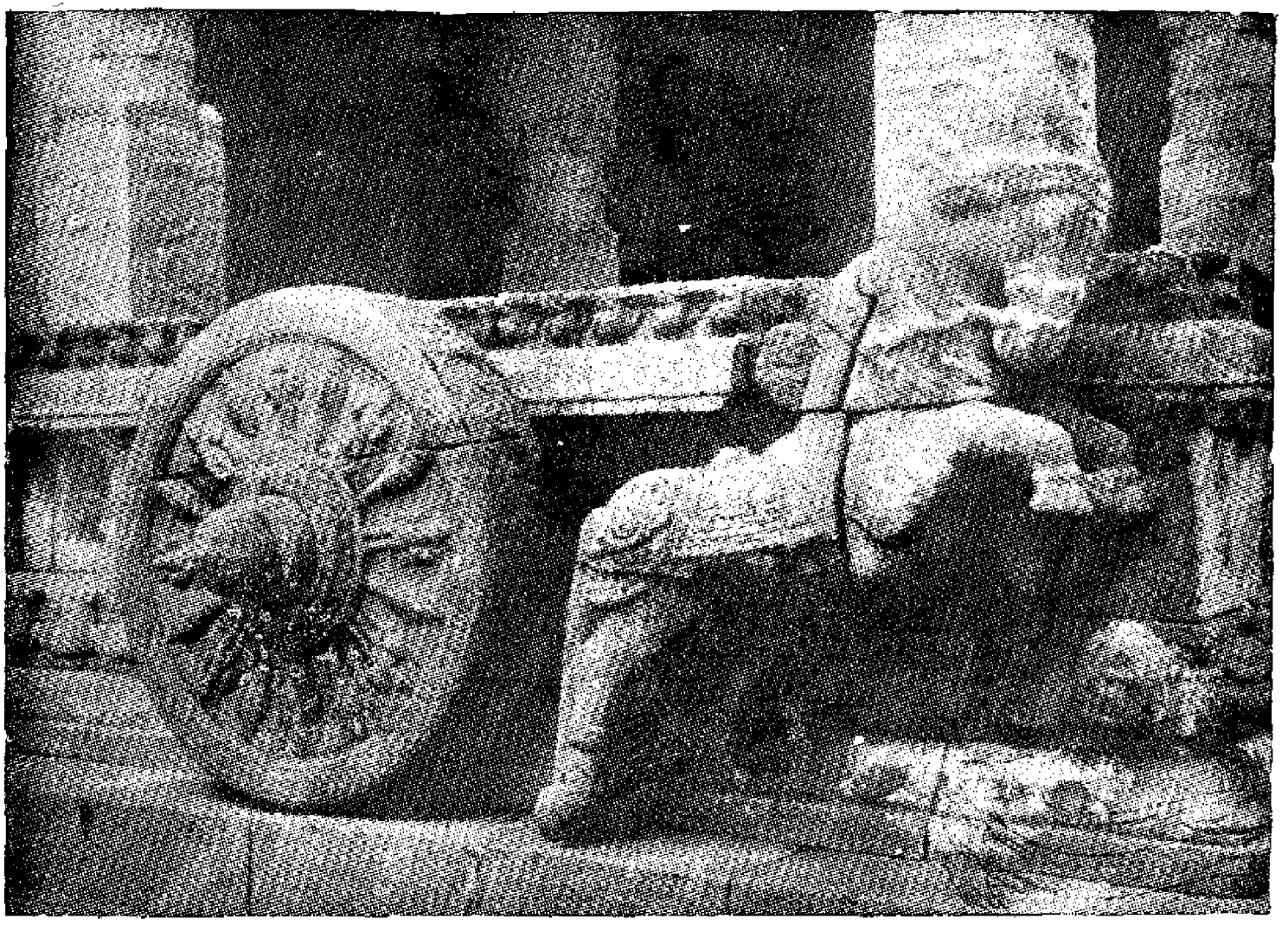
Cholas built a palace in this place and now that place is a separate village called " Cholan Maligai ". At present on the site of the big city there are several small villages.

The temple faces east having three prakarams inside. The breadth of the prakaram is 440 feet east-west and 250 feet north-south. The temple tower is incomplete and is in need of repairs. Next to Rajagopuram, there is a smaller gopuram. There are separate sannadhis for God and Goddess. At present, the first prakaram is not in good condition. Dakshinamurthi, Arthanareeswarar, Brahma Devar, Vinayagar, Valli, Devasena and Durga are the other deities in the shrine. The name of the presiding deity is Somanathar and the Goddess is called Soma Kalambigai.

This temple is famous for beautiful sculptures. There is a life size statue of Durga which is both awe-inspiring and attractive. The front mandapam of Sri Somanathar Sannadhi has been designed like a car pulled by horses and elephants. The wheels of the car are of good workmanship. The image of Arthanareeswarar embodying the Siva-Sakthi union is a masterpiece of sculpture. Just after the front gopuram, Amman Sannadhi is there. Scenes from Narasimhavatara which have been beautifully depicted in stone would not fail to attract the attention of even a casual visitor while approaching the Amman Sannadhi.

In front of Sri Somanathar Sannadhi, there is a mandapam. In the pillars of that mandapam and in some other places of the temple, we can see some inscriptions which relate to the endowments made to the temple and renovation carried out. Some of the inscriptions in Patteeswaram refer to this place as Somanathapuram.

Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar, Sundaramurthy Swamigal, Sekkizhar and Arunagiri Nathar have praised this temple in their hymns. The temple owns only three acres of wet lands and six acres three cents of dry lands. The annual income of this temple is less than Rs. 500. With the help of some devotees, the temple authorities are celebrating the



The chariot-shaped Maha Mandapam
Sri Somanathaswamy Temple, Kizhapazhaiyarai.

Aani Thirumanjanam, Sivarathri and Sandhana Kappu festivals.

Now this temple is under the control of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. They have appointed two Trustees to look after this temple.

The following is an Archaeologist's view of the temple:—

" The poet, Sekkizhar describes Palayyaru as a " glorious city " and also calls it the city of hoary renown in the Chola country, watered by the Cauvery nestling amidst tall and beautiful groves fragrant with flowers, with its broad streets well paved for chariots to ply.

This city is famous for its ancient temples which throw considerable light on the development of Chola architecture and represent certain important stages in the history of Dravidian architecture.

The temple at Kilaippalaiyarai is called Arumolideviswaram after Arumolideva, one of the names of Raja Raja I. Inscriptions of a later period call it the Somanatheswara Temple. An inscription of the Vijayanagar period records the construction of a big mandapam and Sopana in this temple by Vanadaraya Narasingadevan of Poruvanur, evidently a Vijayanagar chieftain.

The temple has two enclosures with entrance gopurams. The walls of the outer enclosure are in ruins and the gopuram exhibits Vijayanagar features. The inner gopuram leads into the temple proper and a cloistered verandah with subsidiary shrines and mandapams at the four corners runs around the temple abutting on the prakaram wall.

The central shrine is square in shape and has a vimanam of three tiers with an octogonal Sikhara, each tier marked by strings of panjaras. The shrine is preceded by an Artha-mandapam and a Mahamandapam, the former having two flights of steps, one on the north and the other on the south. The porch of the Agramandapam is decorated on the outside to

simulate a chariot on wheels drawn by horses. This Agra-mandapam with the porch belongs to the Vijayanagar period as evidenced by an inscription on a pillar dated Saka 1375 recording the construction of the mandapam and the Sopana by a Vijayanagar chieftain. Renovations and additions were made to this temple during the Vijayanagar period. The base of the whole temple structure is moulded and carved with lotus petals which gives the appearance of a Padmakosa.

Images of Dakshinamurthy, Arthanareeswarar and Brahma are found on the south, west and north walls of the central shrine respectively. The Kailasanathar sculpture is remarkable as vividly portraying the scene of Ravana attempting to move the Kailasa Mountain and being trapped under its weight by the pressure exerted by Siva with his toe and Parvathi clinging to the Lord. A bronze image of Natarajar was recently unearthed here during renovation. The shrine of the Goddess is situated in the second enclosure and faces south".

PATTEESWARAM

Sri Dhenupureeswarar Temple

With the fall of the Chola Kingdom in the Thirteenth Century, their capital cities were destroyed by the Pandyas. In the incessant wars, the great and historic city of Pazhayarai was ruined. Today it consists of a number of villages of which Patteesvaram, about five kilometres south-west of Kumbakonam is one. The population of this Panchayat according to the 1961 Census is 3,568.

Patteeswaram preserves the memory of Govinda Dikshithar, the famous Minister of Achuthappa and Raghunatha, the Nayak Kings. In the small temple of the village, there stands a life-like statue of this great scholar-administrator who strove hard for the well-being of the people. Govinda Dikshithar

was also a great religious leader who had constructed a number of temples and mandapams in Kumbakonam and other places. The temple in this village is said to have received large gifts from the Dikshithar who had also made additions to its precincts.

The temple at Patteeswaram is dedicated to Sri Dhenupureeswarar. The place got the name Patteeswaram since a cow, supposed to be the daughter of Kamadhenu had worshipped the deity of this place. In evidence of this, a stone pillar of the temple bears the carving of a cow yielding her milk to the God. The place is also known as Devi Vanam and Sakthi Vanam as Goddess Parvathi is said to have performed penance in this place. This is also evidenced by the installation of an Amman in the temple in the form of doing penance.

The temple is situated in the midst of fertile garden lands and has five beautiful gopurams and three prakarams. The Moolavar is Dhenupureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. There are in the temple the idols of Somaskandhar, Thirugnana-Sambandhar, Swarna Vinayagar, Mahalingam, Shanmugar, Ramalingam and Lakshmi. The Saptha Kannigas are installed around the first prakaram. The sixty-three Nayanmars have been installed in the mandapam on the north-western corner of the first prakaram. The second prakaram contains the Alankara Mandapam on the eastern side and the idols of Appar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar and the Madhavarana Vinayagar on the southern side. The Yagasala and Bairavar sanctum are on the eastern side. The idol of Durga has been installed near the entrance to the northern gopuram. This is known as Kottai Vayil Durga. It is said that the idols of Durga, Madhavarana Vinayagar, Shanmugar and Bairavar have been brought from the old palace of Cholas and installed here.

The other names of the presiding deity are Patteeswarar, Patteesar and Pattiappar. It is seen from the stone inscriptions that the God has been referred to as Patteeswara Nainar. The Goddess is known as Gnanambigai or Palvalainayagi.

Saint Thirugnanasambandhar is said to have visited this place and sung in praise of the God. It is also said that as instructed by the Lord, Nandhi had moved a little with a view to enable Gnanasambandhar to have a clear darshan of the God. In commemoration of this incident, all Nandhis in this temple have been installed in such a way that they are not in line with the God's image.

There are five holy waters in this place, viz., Gnanavavi, Kodi Theertham, Thapasukeni, Theppakulam and Gayathri-kulam.

The exact age of the temple is not known. However, it is believed to have been constructed about 900 years ago. There are five stone inscriptions on the walls which relate to the endowments made by the rulers of the region.

Poojas are performed six times a day in this temple following Karana Agama system. They are paid salary from the temple funds. There are jewels worth about Rs. 8,400.

There are about 44·83 acres of wet lands and 114·45 acres of dry lands for this temple which are leased out. Besides, a sum of Rs. 284 per annum is obtained from the Government as 'Mohini grant'. The income is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple and for the periodical conduct of festivals.

There are ten vahanams, four rishabams, a bandicoot, a peacock, an elephant, a demon, a giant and a snake. There are also a car and a palanquin. The three important festivals of the temple are: Visaka festival in the month of Vaikasi, Muthupandhal festival in Aani and Theerthavari festival in Margazhi month. Besides these, several other small festivals are conducted during each month.

There are several legends connected with the sacred waters and deity of this temple. A few of them are given below :—

Once there was a sage by name Medhavi and he had several disciples. He had an invitation from another sage to

participate in a sacrifice or Yaga. Before he went to attend this yaga, he called one of his students by name Dharmasarma and asked him to keep a careful watch over the cows till he returned to his Ashramam. The Sage, however, on his return found that his instructions had been flouted by the student. The irate sage cursed the student to become a dog. This dog after a long time came to Pateeswaram and regained its original form after bathing in the holy waters of Gnanavavi and worshipping the Lord.

It is believed that once a king by name Chitrasenan of Kambili who was issueless got children after visiting this place and worshipping the deity with his wives. Another king by name Sathyumnan is said to have washed off his sin of Brahminicide after a dip in the holy water of Gnanavavi.

It is said that Saint Thirugnanasambandhar during the course of his tour of the Saivite temples came to this place with his followers. It was the height of summer when he visited the temple and the heat was unbearable. To the surprise of everybody, they did not feel the heat as a divine pandhal made of pearls was erected by Lord Patteeswarar which provided them a good shade. To commemorate this incident, a festival is being conducted in the temple as '*Muthupandhal Festival*' every year in the month of Aani.

It is also claimed that the Sage Viswamithra attained the title 'Brahmarishi' only after visiting this place and worshipping Lord Patteeswarar.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department from the year 1945. They have appointed a Board of Trustees, besides an Executive Officer to look after the day-to-day administration of the temple.

THIRUCHCHATHIMUTRAM

Sri Sakthivaneswaraswamy Temple

Thiruchchathimutram, a small village near Kumbakonam is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Sakthivaneswarar or Sivakkozhundheeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. The nearest railway station being Darasuram is at a distance of about three kilometres. Saints Appar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord here. Goddess Parvathi is also said to have performed a penance here. In the early Chola period, the capital Pazhayarai consisted of the small villages of Thiruchchathimutram, Patteeswaram, Cholamaligai and Nandhipura Vinnagaram etc.

The temple covers an area of about 0·87 acre. The Rajagopuram of the temple though now in a state of disrepair stands majestically defying the ravages of time. To its right is a small shrine dedicated to Vallabha Ganapathy and to its left are seen the remains of a big mandapam. There are two prakarams and two sancta apart from two beautiful vimanams with plaster figures on them. In the centre of the spacious outer prakaram stands the main shrine. There is a Maha Mandapam in front and on its northern side stands a small shrine dedicated to Goddess Periyanayaki (Brhannayaki), the consort of the Lord. On the right side of the Lord's sanctum, the festival idol of Sri Somaskandha Murthy is enshrined. It is learnt from an inscription of the nineteenth year of the reign of Parakesari (Rajendra II) found in the temple of Thiruvilakkudi that this temple had served as a stronghold during the Thirteenth Century.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns ancient jewels in gold and silver, of which the costly Padhakkam deserves special mention. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 38·97 acres of wet and 27·45 acres of dry lands apart from three houses which fetch an annual income about Rs. 8,500 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for its maintenance. There is an ancient wooden ratham in the temple which is about twenty feet in height. Brahmothsavam in Chithirai (April-May), Navarathri in Purattasi (September-October) and Rathasapthami during

Thai (January-February) are the important annual festivals celebrated on a grand scale. But they have been since discontinued for want of funds.

The glories of Sivakkozhundheeswarar have been eulogised by Saint Appar in his hymns. It is stated that while he was camping at Chidambaram, he heard the greatness of Saint Thirugnanasambandhar, the divine child. He hastened to Sirkali to meet him. After having darshan of the divine child, he continued his pilgrimage to the temples situated on both sides of the Cauvery and went to Thiruchchathimutram. He sang in praise of the Lord and prayed to Him to bless him with His "*Thiruvadi Deeksha*", i.e., to imprint the Lord's holy feet on his head. But Lord Siva called him to Nallur where his request was complied with. It is also believed that Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord.

Legend has it that Goddess Parvathi once came to this place which was then a thick forest. She did a severe penance here so as to join Lord Siva. Pleased with Her penance, Lord Siva emerged from the "Lingam" in the form of a Holy Fire. On seeing the *Jyothiswaroopam* of the Lord and attracted by its beauty and splendour the Goddess could not resist her temptation. She at once embraced the Lord and kissed Him. Hence the presiding deity of this sthalam is known as Sivakkozhundheeswarar and the place derived the name as *Thiru Sakthi Mutham*. Later on, the name has been corrupted into Thiruchchathimutram. The deity is also known as Sri Sakthivaneswarar and Sakthi Thazhuviya Nathar. This is narrated beautifully by Sekkizhar in his famous "*Periа puranam*". A sculptural representation of this can also be found in the temple on the left side of the sanctum sanctorum. This is a unique and beautiful piece of sculpture representing Goddess Parvathi embracing the Lingam.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members who are appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUCHERAI

Sri Saranatha Perumal Temple

Thirucherai is about fifteen kilometres from Kumbakonam railway station. It is on the Kumbakonam—Thiruvarur bus route. Sri Saranatha Perumal Temple is said to have been built during the reign of Kulothunga.

The sacred tank of the temple is called Sara Pushkarani. The magnificent Rajagopuram of the fame is about ninety feet tall. There is another gopuram next to the Rajagopuram.

The plinth area of the temple is about 1·5 acres having two prakarams. There are two separate sancta for the presiding deity Sri Saranatha Perumal and the Goddess Sri Saranayaki Thayar. The presiding deity twelve feet high, is in the standing posture and faces east. The image of Cauvery Thayar is on the north side and Markandeyar is on the south side. Apart from the festival idols of Sri Saranatha Perumal, and His consorts Sri Devi, Bhu Devi and Neela Devi, there are other festival images as well. There is a separate sanctum for Lord Narasimhamurthy with two Lakshmis in the Mahamandapam.

In the Arthamandapam, there are the festival idols of Sri Ramar, Lakshmanar, Sita, Hanumar, Krishna, (Kalinganarthanam), Sri Balasaranathar, Nammalwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Koorath Alwar, Thondaradipodi Alwar etc. There are two separate sancta for the deities of Sri Rajagopala Perumal with His consorts Sri Rukmani and Sathyabhama and Sri Thiruvenkadamudaiyan.

On the southern side of the inner prakaram, the images of Thirupan Alwar, Poigai Alwar, Boothath Alwar, Perialwar, Kulasekhara Alwar, Thondaradipodi Alwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Nammalwar, Udaiyavar, Koorath Alwar and Sri Andal are kept in a separate mandapam. There is a Hanumar shrine on the eastern bank of the tank and on the north-eastern side there is a Vinayagar idol.

There are images of Azhagiya Manavala Nayakar, the King who ruled Tanjore with his wife and Minister Narasa Boopalar on the pillars of Kalyana Mandapam.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung about ten hymns in praise of this temple. There are six poojas daily. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated for ten days in the month of Thai.

The temple owns jewels like Diamond *Namam*, Diamond ear-rings, Mangamalai, Attigai and Pathakkam worth about Rs. 30,900. The temple also owns about 139 acres of wet lands and 113 acres of dry lands. Through this, the temple is getting about Rs. 40,500 as income annually. Besides the Brahmothsavam, there are other festivals like Navarathri, Karthigai Deepam, Sri Krishna Jayanthi etc. The Lord of this place is said to bless issueless couple with progeny. Unmarried girls who sincerely worship the Perumal could hope to get married early. There is a belief that the God does not spare those who misappropriate temple properties.

The legend is that Sri Maha Vishnu once ordered Brahma to make a pot out of mud (*ghatam*) and to play it according to Vedha Agama Sastra. Accordingly Brahma went to all the places, took mud and made ghatams out of them and played. All the ghatams were broken. When Brahma explained His difficulties to Mahavishnu, He informed that there are twelve important places for him and among these places Thirucherai (Sara Kshetram) is to his liking. He asked him, to take mud from this place to make ghatam. Accordingly he did and succeeded. Hence this place is called Sara Kshetram.

There is a legend that Cauvery made penance invoking the blessing of Lord Mahavishnu so that she should be placed above Ganga. He gave darshan for her and also fulfilled her request. There is also another story. The stones for building Sri Rajagopalaswami Temple at Mannargudi were sent through this village during Alagiya Manavala King's reign. The then Minister, Narasu Boopalar who thought of renovating this

temple, ordered that one stone for each cart be given for the construction of Sri Saranatha Perumal Temple. This was brought to the notice of the King by some people. The King wanted to inspect this place. As the Minister knew that the King was having faith in Sri Rajagopala Perumal, he installed an idol of Sri Rajagopala Perumal with His consorts Sathyabhama and Rukmani by His side at this village as in Mannargudi. When the King came on inspection, he was convinced that the Minister was also having faith in his God and appreciated his act. The King also got the blessings of Sri Saranatha Perumal.

An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and five Trustees are managing the temple administration.

NALLUR

Sri Palasavaneswaraswamy Temple

Sri Palasavaneswaraswamy Temple is one more ancient Saivite shrine of importance in the neighbourhood of Kumbakonam whose period of establishment is unknown. The temple is located in a place called Nallur (Injikollaivattam) which is about fifteen kilometres south-east of Kumbakonam railway station. The place is at a distance of fifty-six kilometres from Thanjavur on the main road from Kumbakonam to Thiruvarur. It is a Panchayat having a population of 2,430 according to 1961 Census. Major repairs were carried out in the temple in 1957-1958 and a Kumbabhishegam was performed.

The Swayambu Lingam here is two feet high with a diameter of about four feet. The Lord and His consort are called Sri Palasavaneswaraswamy and Periyanayaki Amman. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar has sung in praise of the deity here.

The temple is spread over an area of fifteen cents. The sanctum sanctorum is crowned with a vimanam.

Two poojas are performed daily. The temple possesses a few silver ornaments. The lands of the temple amount to a little over ten acres and they fetch a sum of about Rs. 2,000 annually. This income is used for the day-to-day maintenance of the temple. The temple has no vahanas and no festival is celebrated.

Maha Sivarathri and Karthigai Deepam are the important days in this temple and over hundred people are said to assemble here on these occasions to offer worship. The administration of the temple is in the hands of a Board of Trustees of three members. There is an Executive Officer of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

INJIKOLLAI

Sri Gnanapureeswarar Temple

Injikollai is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Gnanapureeswarar who is a Pradhishta Lingam. His divine consort is known as Gnanambigai. It is believed that this ancient shrine was built by the Chola King Kulothunga II. Renovations were not made afterwards and the temple is now in a dilapidated condition. There are several ancient stone inscriptions.

The village is situated at a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Kumbakonam on the road to Thiruvarur. It is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train. The temple which covers an area of about 1·67 acres has a single prakaram and two sancta apart from sixteen stone pillars. The presiding deity Sri Gnanapureeswarar is facing east while His consort Gnanambigai in a standing posture faces south. She is hailed as a great "*Varaprasadhi*" noted for her Shakthi. Devotees

believe that She readily grants boons to those who worship Her. Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Sundareswarar, Meenakshi Amman and Chandikeswarar are the sub-deities here. There are several festival idols for the God, Goddess, Somaskandhar and others.

Poojas are performed three times a day. The temple owns about 16·93 acres of both wet and dry lands which are leased out for an annual rent of about Rs. 2,000. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants and for its upkeep and general maintenance.

Navarathri in Purattasi (September-October), Masi Sivarathri and Thiruvadhirai in Margazhi (December-January) are the major festivals celebrated here every year which have been now temporarily suspended for want of funds. These festivals were attended by a large number of devotees from far and near.

The temple is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

NANNILAM TALUK

NANNILAM

Sri Madhuvaneswarar Temple

This is one of the ancient temples at Nannilam. This tiny temple is situated about five kilometres from the Nannilam railway station at the end of the Mayuram—Nannilam road by the side of the river Mudikondan. It is served both by bus and train. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 7,874.

The temple which is constructed on an artificial hillock covers an area of about 30 cents and has a small Rajagopuram in front. It presents a good view. There are two prakarams and two sancta here apart from two small Vimanams. On the northern side of the temple is the sacred tank known as the Soola Theertham. It is said that the Lord Himself had created this Theertham with His trident. The tank later assumed the names of Madhu Theertham and Brihad Ganga. Much sanctity is attached to this tank. It is said that Lord Siva had given Moksha to a parrot which fell with a thud into this tank. It is believed that those who perform the *Panchakshara japam* after ablutions in this tank will be endowed with supreme happiness. The tank is now in a completely neglected state.

The presiding deity is known as Madhuvaneswarar, a 3·5 feet high Swayambu Lingam facing east. The idol of His consort Madhuvana Nayagi also known as Braheswari is a fine specimen of ancient sculpture. There is a separate shrine here for Sri Thillai Nathar. Mention should be made of the bronze idol of Bhoga Sakthi Amman about 3·5 feet

in height kept near the image of the presiding deity. There are also Agasthya Lingam and Brahma Lingam, the deities believed to have been worshipped by Sage Agasthya and Lord Brahma after whom they had been named. Close to the Agasthya Lingam is a flight of steps on the mound leading to the prakaram where the shrines of Sri Somaskandhar, Sri Narthana Ganapathi, Sri Dakhshinamurthy, Lord Brahma and Durga are located. Unlike in other temples, circumambulation (pradakshinam) in the prakaram is done both clockwise and anti-clockwise, as according to convention a clockwise round will tantamount to showing discourtesy to Chandikeswarar whose sannadhi is situated not on the mound, but separately in the ground below. To worship Durga, therefore, one will have to turn back and come counter-clockwise.

A beehive which is of peculiar formation was originally in the sanctum of the presiding deity. Later it was shifted to Sri Subramaniar's sannadhi. Now it is to be found both in Somaskandhar's shrine and in Muruga's sannadhi. The bees do not harm anyone, as they are considered holy; pooja is also done to them.

Legend has it that the Devas harassed by the Asuras took refuge at the feet of Lord Siva here who transformed them into bees to beguile the Asuras. The Lord here is therefore called Sri Madhuvaneswarar and the place as Madhuvanam. The place is also known as Devaranyam. Saint Sundaramurthy Nayanar has composed as many as eleven sacred verses in praise of the Lord here, hailing Him as " The Lord of the big temple at Nannilam " in each verse. He has also immortalised the builder's name King Koch chenga Chola of Thanjavur in the concluding verse.

Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary priests. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 500 all donated by the devotees. The landed properties of the temple fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,300 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and

for its general maintenance. There are two rishaba vahanas here apart from an ajah (ram) all made of wood.

Vaikasi Visagam, Ani Thirumanjanam, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Ayppasi Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Valli Thirumanam and Thai Poosam are the regular annual festivals celebrated here. Of these, the Vaikasi Visagam and Valli Thirumanam in Karthigai are the most important ones when a large number of devotees from far and near congregate.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUPPUGALUR

Sri Agneeswaraswamy Temple

The ancient temple of Sri Agneeswaraswamy is centrally situated in the village of Thiruppugalur facing east. It is about six kilometres from Nannilam. The population according to 1961 Census is 2,247. The unique feature of the temple is its location. The temple with a beautiful garden is surrounded by a moat, 130' wide. The moat is considered sacred. On the south-eastern side of the moat, a passage has been created to enter the temple. There is evidence to show that once this temple was fully surrounded by water. The temple occupies an area of 1·67 acres. The Mutt at this place was originally founded at Velakurichi in Tirunelveli district.

The ninety feet artistic Rajagopuram with five tiers beautifies the entrance of the temple. Attractive and colourful images are seen on this gopuram. There is another sixty feet gopuram in the inner prakaram having three storeys. Idols depicting Banasuran trying to remove the Lingam and Lord Agni giving darshan to Chandrasekharar are seen at the top of the Vasantha mandapam. Opposite to this is the bed chamber

(palli-arai) on which is depicted the cosmic Siva-Sakthi dance with Nandhi and Thamburu playing the drum and Veena respectively. There are two prakarams in this temple.

Separate sannadhis exist for Lord Thiruppugulur Nathar (Agneeswarar) and Lord Varthamaneswarar. Saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar have sung hymns in praise of this Lord. Sambandhar has also sung a separate hymn on Lord Varthamaneswarar. The presiding deity Thiruppugalur Nathar (Agneeswarar), a Swayambu Lingam is also named as Agnipureeswarar, Saranyapureeswarar. Punnaka Nathar, Prathiyaksha Varadar and Konapiran. Nandhi, Bali Peedam and Dwajasthambam are in the outer prakaram. On the northern side, the shrine of the divine consort Karunthazh Kuzhali (Karunthar Kuzhali) or Sooligambal is situated.

Varthamaneswarar's shrine is on the northern side of the Agneeswarar's sanctum. The shrine faces east. The divine consort Manonmani or Varthamaneswari faces south. Around the sancta of the Gods are the images of other deities like Vinayagar, Murugar etc.

Saint Appar is said to have attained 'Mukthi' in this holy place. The nandhavanam here is named as Appar Nandhavanam. There is a separate shrine for Chandrasekharar. As Lord Agni had worshipped here and attained salvation, the presiding deity is named Agneeswarar.

In the inner prakaram, the idols of Arupathumuvar (63 saints) are situated. *Muruga Nayanar*, one of the 63 Saivite saints was born in this place. He is said to have been fetching flowers for the Lord every day. He later attained eternal bliss. A statue of Muruga Nayanar is installed in the sannadhi of Varthamaneswarar. Now a flower garden (nandhavanam) is maintained in his name. Besides several flower plants, it contains a number of herbs required for Siddha Vaidhya. The tank surrounding the temple is called Agni Theertham or Bana Theertham.

There is a legend that Lord Agni had performed penance in this place and the tank was dug by him. Hence it is called

Agni Theertham. There is a separate shrine for Lord Agni Deva and there is also a festival deity of Agni Deva made of Panchalogam. The festival idol with two faces, seven hands, three legs and four horns is a rare feature and reveals good workmanship.

The two important festivals are Appar Swamigal festival for ten days in the month of Chithirai and the annual Brahmothsavam for ten days in the Vaikasi month. Besides, Adi Pooram, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Deepam, Thiruvadhirai, Thai Poosam and Maha Sivarathri are the festivals celebrated.

There are a number of Tamil inscriptions on the temple walls. According to the Tamil booklet issued by the Temple Devasthanam, Government have taken copies of 67 inscriptions. From one of them it is understood that this temple was built before the period of Raja Raja Chola (985-1014 A.D.). The inscriptions throw light on the endowments made to the temple in the past and the names of kings who built the various parts of the shrine.

The temple owns about 1096·76 acres of wet lands, 350·00 acres of dry lands, 21 houses and 7 shops. The annual income out of this is about Rs. 1,73,000. Two free Siddha Dispensaries, one at Thiruppugalur and another in Nannilam, a rest house in the name of Mahatma Gandhi and a library in the name of Thirugnanasambandhar are being run by this temple. Free mid-day meals are provided for hundred school going children.

Six poojas are performed daily. The antique jewels an the silver kavachams are worth about Rs. 45,000. There are twelve vahanas in this temple.

There is an interesting story about the divine consort Sri Karuntharkuzhali. Once when a woman in Polagam, a nearby village was suffering from labour pain, the Goddess is said to have helped her in the guise of a midwife. As a

token of appreciation, the Pugalur Manachi village was given to this temple. Even now, the whole of Pugalur Manachi village belongs to this temple. Always the divine consort is decorated with a white saree in the evenings to mark this incident.

Saint Sundarar is said to have miraculously got gold when he required it for celebrating the Panguni Uthira Thirunal festival at Thiruvarur. There is a dilapidated Mutt called Thirunavukkarasar Mutt in the western Madavilagam. Saints Appar, Sambandhar, Siruthondar and Nilanakkar are said to have stayed in the Mutt of Muruga Nayanar.

In the past, the Thiruppugalur Velakurichi Adheenam was looking after the affairs of the temple. An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and three Trustees are managing this temple. The Velakurichi Adheenakartha is the hereditary Trustee.

SEEYATHAMANGAI

H/o. SESHAMOOLAI

Sri Brahmapureswaraswamy Temple

Sathamangai which is now populary known as " Seeyathamangai " is situated at a distance of about eleven kilometres east of Nannilam railway station. Buses are plying frequently from Nagapattinam and Nannilam to this sacred place. After alighting from bus at Seeyathamangai, one has to walk about six furlongs towards north, crossing the Mudikondan river to reach this shrine. This is an important sthalam since Thiruneelanakka Nayanar lived here. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 1,224.

The temple which covers an area of about an acre has a big sixty feet high five tiered Rajagopuram in the front and presents

an inspiring view. It is said to be an ancient temple built by the Chola King Karikala, the great. It was renovated by a staunch Saivite devotee belonging to the Chettiar community and a Kumbabishegam was performed in 1928. The temple here is facing west. There is a tank in front of the temple. The presiding diety Sri Brahmapureeswarar is an installed Lingam, facing west. On the southern side of the temple there is a shrine for the divine consort Malarkanni Ammai with a separate prakaram and a small Rajagopuram. She is in a standing posture facing west. There are also separate shrines for Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Somaskandhar. The images of Neelanakkar and his wife are found on the southern side of the temple. In the Arthamandapam, three is a small sannadhi for Lord Nataraja. Beyond this, is the sanctum sanctorum where Sri Brahmapureeswarar or Ayavanthinathar is installed. While coming round this, one could worship Arthanareeswarar and Bikshadanar on the northern side and Agasthiyar, Umamaheswarar and Ganapthi in dancing pose on the southern side. This mandapam around the sanctum of the Lord has been beautifully built with black stone and devotees will be greatly struck by its wonderful workmanship and architectural splendour. The pillars, the ceiling and joints, all of them in stone give an artistic look to this ancient shrine. The prakaram is spacious and the outer walls are fairly big and high. The beautiful shrine of the Goddess which is also built with black stone can be reached through a gate on the southern wall. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar, a contemporary of Thiruneelanakkar visited this shrine and composed several sacred verses in praise of the Lord here.

Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary Brahmin Gurukkals. The temple owns a few ornaments in gold and silver, mostly donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 84·49 acres of wet and 21·05 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 10,700 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its upkeep and general maintenance. The hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 150 per annum. There are as many as five

vahanas here, namely, rishabam, peacock, swan, horse and bandicoot, all made of wood.

Avani Moolam is the only important annual festival celebrated in the temple during which a grand procession of the Panchamurthis takes place attended by about 500 devotees from far and near.

The affairs of the temple are managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. The Executive Officer of Rathnagiriswarar Temple of Thirumarugal is in charge of this temple also.

Legend has it that since *Ayan* (Brahma) is stated to have worshipped the Lord here, He is known as "Ayavanthinathar" and Brahmapureeswarar and the temple is known as "Ayavanthi". Sekkizhar's "Periapuranam" refers to this shrine as "Sathamangai Ayavanthi".

Neelanakkar was a great Vedic scholar and he spent his life mostly in the worship of the presiding deity of this shrine and in being hospitable to Saivite devotees. Once on the day of Thiruvadhirai, he visited this temple with his wife and after offering pooja, stood before the Lord in deep meditation. He noticed a spider falling over the Lingam. Greatly perturbed by this, his wife at once puffed over the Lingam in order to cast off the spider. This greatly annoyed Neelanakkar who scolded his wife for exhibiting such scant respect to the Lord. Thereafter he left her in the temple and returned home. The same night, Lord Siva appeared in his dream and told him that all over his body there were swellings except the portion which was puffed off by his wife. The Lord is said to have showed him also His body which had bubbles all over except the spot from which Nayanar's wife blew off the spider. Greatly touched by His grace, Nayanar rushed to the temple at once, worshipped the Lord and returned home with his wife. This interesting episode is narrated by Sekkizhar extensively in about 38 stanzas in his Periapuranam.

தருதொ ழில்திரு மறையவர் சாத்தமங் கையினில்
வருமு தற்பெருந் திருநீல நக்கர்தாள் வணங்கி
இருபி றப்புடை அந்தணர் ஏறுயர்த் தவர்பால்
ஒருமை உய்த்துணர் நமிநந்தி யார்தொழில் உரைப்பாம்.

THIRUCHCHENKATTANKUDI

Sri Uthirapatheeswaraswamy Temple

Thiruchchenkattankudi is a village about ten kilometres from Nannilam. The population of this place is 1,302. Though no evidence is available as to the origin of Sri Uthirapatheeswaraswamy Temple, there are some inscriptions which reveal that renovations were made now and then. The front mandapam of this temple was built by some individuals.

The deity is called Sri Ganapatheeswarar or Sri Uthirapatheeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam and the Goddess Kuzhal Umai Nangai. Sri Uthirapatheeswarar is the festival deity. There are two prakarams. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple. One of the famous verse of Thirugnanasambandhar runs thus.

நுண்ணியான் மிகப்பெரியான் ஓவுளார் வாயுளான்
தண்ணியான் வெய்யான் நம் தலைமேலான் மனத்துளான்
திண்ணியான் செங்காட்டங் குடியான்செஞ் சடைமதியக்
கண்ணியான் கண்ணுதலான் கணபதீச் சரத்தானே.

The idols in the Ashtamurthi Mandapam reveal good workmanship.

The front gopuram which is seventy two feet tall is having five tiers. There are two other gopurams, one over the southern entrance and the other on the western side. In the front mandapam Nandhi and Dwajasthambam are located. The divine consort is facing south in a separate shrine. The idols of Siruthondar,

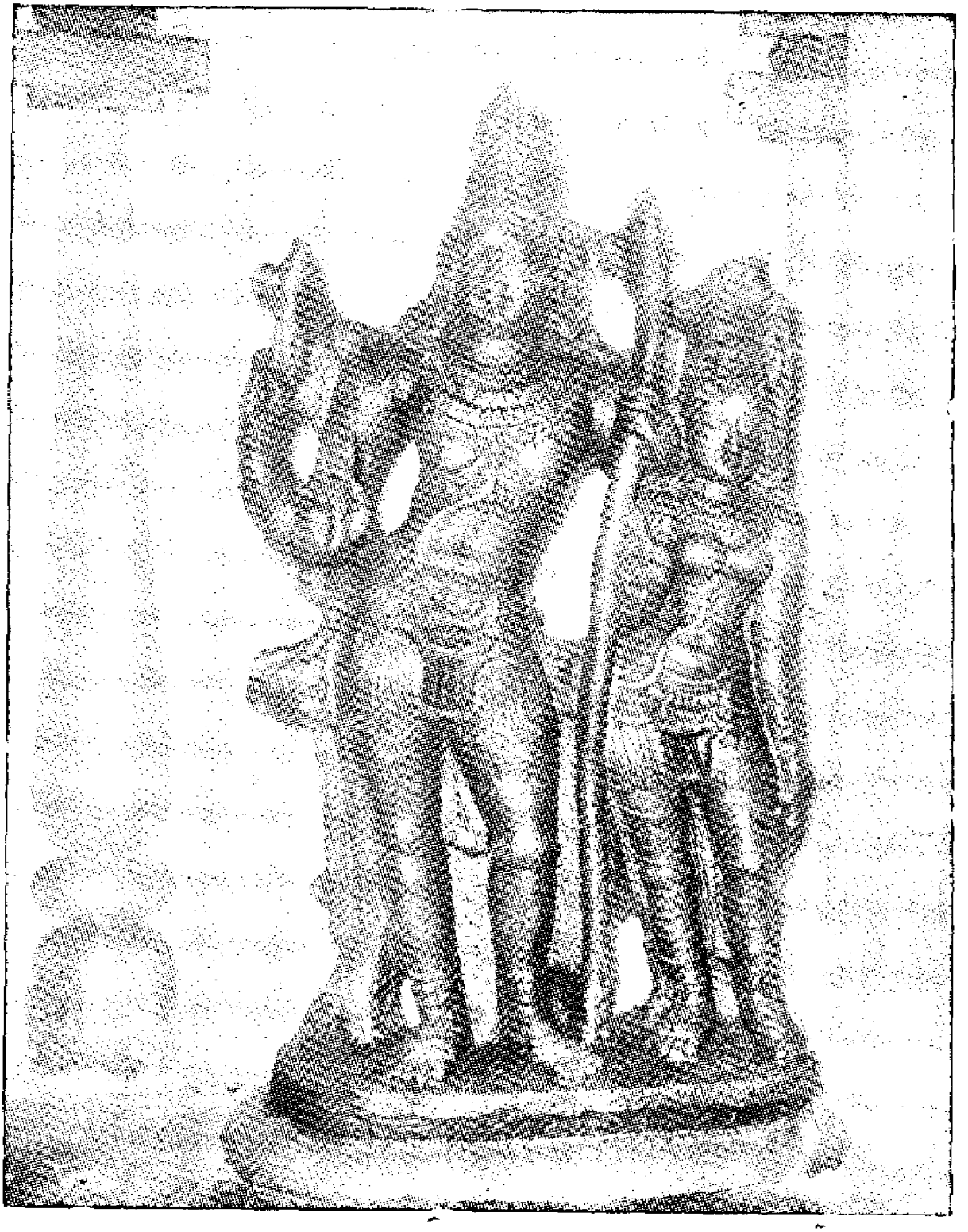
Siralar, Venkattu Nangai and Santhana Nangai etc., are in the inner prakaram. The temple occupies about 1·91 acre of land.

There is an interesting legend about the temple's deity. The great Saint Siruthondar used to take his meal every day only after feeding Saivite pilgrims and devoteess. To test him, Lord Siva came in the guise of a mendicant. Siruthondar invited him to his house for food. The beggar (Lord Siva) warned him that he would not care to invite him if he could visualise the terrible vow to which he was bound. His practice was, he observed, to take once in a year the flesh of a boy of five years. Siruthondar smilingly continued to press his hospitality on the beggar. When his boy Sirala came from school, he was bathed and adorned as if for an auspicious function and then the gruesome tragedy was enacted. In the name of Siva, the lad's body was held by the mother and it was cut to pieces by the father.

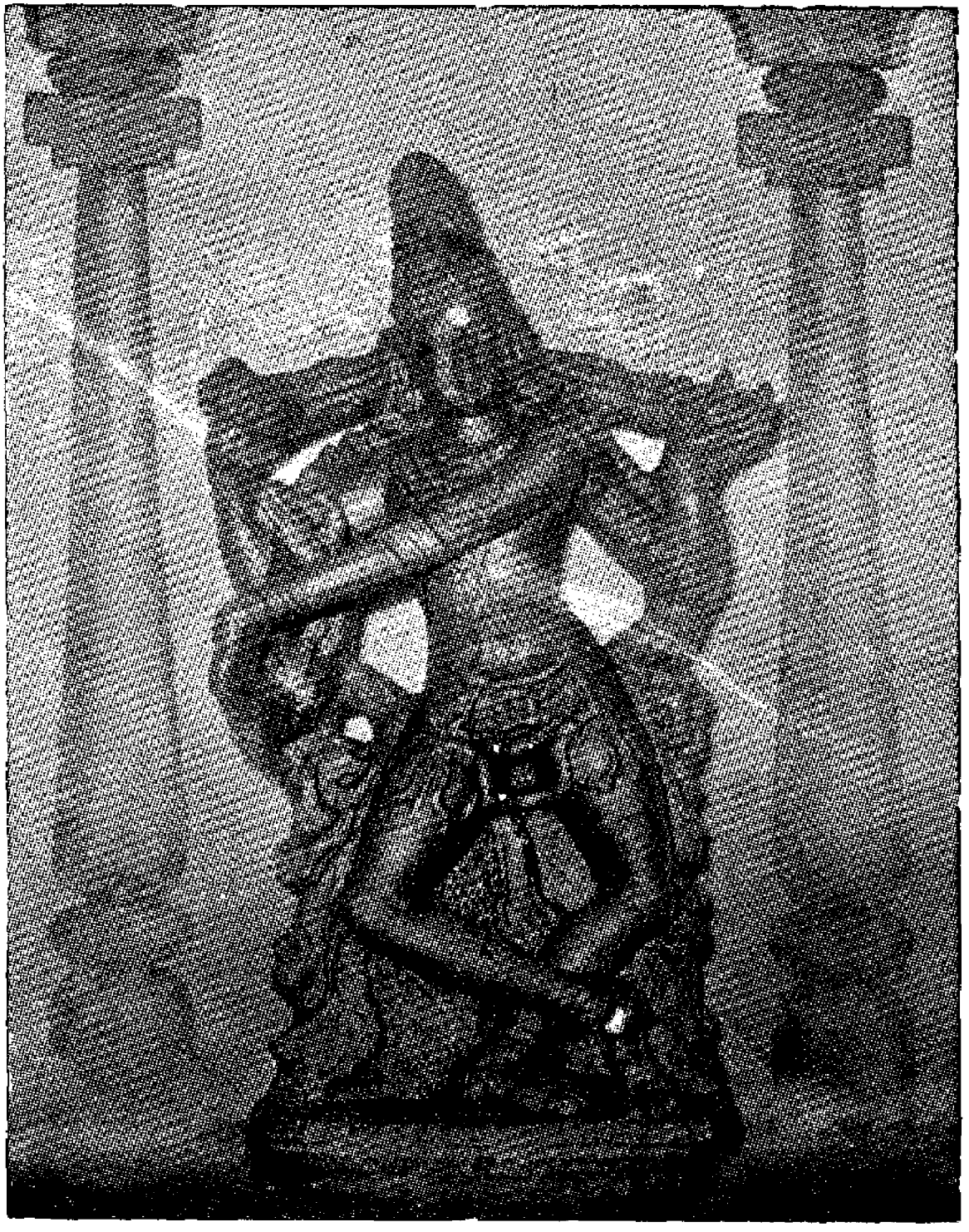
When the Lord sat at his meal, He asked his host for the company of his boy. Siruthondar was in a fix and was afraid that his guest might go away without eating. Just at this moment a miracle happened. In response to his father's desperate call, at the divine beggar's suggestion, Sirala was found to come in his natural cheerfulness as if from the school. Struck with wonder, Siruthondar now realised that his guest was none else than Siva Himself. Siruthondar, his wife, his son and his maid servant who had cooked the boy's flesh were all taken to Lord Siva's Heaven.

There is a legend concerning Lord Vinayagar. Vinayagar killed the demon Gajamuka (elephant-faced) and the whole vicinity became dyed with the blood of the slaughtered demonn In order to expiate the sin, Vinayagar (Ganapathy) worshipped Lord Siva in consequence of which the spot came to be known as Ganapatheeswaram. The story goes that Lord Siva Himself issued a mandate that pooja should be performed to His son before it was done to Himself. On the Vinayaga Chathurthi day in particular which falls in Avani (late in August or early in September) this episode is celebrated on a grand

Sri Vathapi Ganapathi
Sri Uthrapatheeswarar Temple
Thiruchchengattangudi.



Sri Tripurantakar & Tripurasundari
Sri Uthrapatheeswarar Temple,
Thiruchchengattangudi.



Sri Nuttamurti
Sri Uthrapatheeswarar Temple,
Thiruchchengattangudi.

scale. A peculiarity of the icon of Vinayagar here is that it has a human face (Naramukha) and not that of an elephant.

Six poojas are performed in this temple daily. The temple owns about 854·00 acres of wet, 137·00 acres of dry lands, two houses, three thatched houses and jewels worth about Rs. 33,000. It is getting about Rs. 74,000, as annual income. Sixty school going children are provided with mid-day meals by this temple. "Amuthu Padayal" festival in the month of Chithirai is an important festival in this temple. Navarathri, Karthigai Deepam, Sivarathri and Skandha Shasti are the other important festivals celebrated.

The Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and the hereditary Trustee are in charge of the administration of this temple.

SRIVANJIYAM

Sri Vanjinathaswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of about ten kilometres west of Nannilam on the road to Kodavasal, Srivanjiyam with a population of 1,480 is an ancient Saivite centre which has been classified as the Seventieth shrine on the southern bank of the river Cauvery. The greatness and sanctity of this celebrated shrine dedicated to Sri Vanjinathar is extensively dealt with in Puranas.

The temple which covers an area of about 3·5 acres is said to have been built during the period of Chola rulers. Many of the additions to the temple have been made during the Nayak rule. There are several interesting stone inscriptions here on the walls of the temple. The temple is spacious with three towers and three large prakarams besides three vimanams. There is a five tiered majestic Rajagopuram at

the entrance of the temple on the northern side of the first prakaram. The sacred tank, Guptha Gangai which is parallel to the temple and about 440 feet in length has fine steps. The temple seen together with this big tank presents an inspiring view.

Puranas say that Brahma, Vishnu and Indra worshipped here. An important feature in this sthalam is the great sanctity attached to the tank "Guptha Gangai" or "Muni Theertham". Devotees throng at this place on Sundays in the month of Karthigai for a bath in the tank. Samboba Puranam says that many of our diseases will be cured by a bath in this holy tank. In view of the sanctity attached to Theertham and the shrine here, this place is considered more sacred than even Banares. There is a popular Tamil saying in vogue: *"Kasikku Veesam Kooda."*

Adjoining the tank is a Sandalwood Tree which is the Sthala Viruksham here. On the south, there is a shrine for "Yamadharmarajan" seen in sitting pose facing south. It is customary here for devotees to first worship him before proceeding inside the temple. In the third prakaram there are beautiful images of Sattanathar, Bhikshadanar and Chandrasekharar. The icon of Muruga seated on a peacock mount together with His two consorts is of good workmanship. There are two separate sannadhis for Sri Dakhsinamurthy.

The presiding deity of the temple Sri Vanjinathar is a Swayambu Lingam. The Lord is also known as Gandharanyar. There is a separate shrine for His consort known as Mangala Nayagi. There are about 103 verses in praise of the Goddess. In the northern prakaram, there is a small shrine for Goddess Durgai seen with eight hands with weapons and with one leg resting over the head of Mahishasuran. The idols of Durgai, Bairavar and Rahu-Kethu are of fine workmanship. A note worthy feature here is the Yama Vahanam (mount) over which Lord Vanjinathar is taken in procession during Masi-Bharani, a festival which attracts a large number of devotees.

Saints Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have visited this shrine and sung their praise of

the Lord in their sacred hymns. Saint Appar has stressed the intense spiritual significance in worshipping the Lord.

படையும் பூதமும் பாம்பும்புல் வாயதள்
உடையுந் தாங்கிய உத்தம னூர்க்கிடம்
புடைசூ ழாவிய பூம்பொழில் வாஞ்சியம்
அடைய வல்லவர்க் கல்லலொன் றில்லையே.

அருக்கன் அங்கி யமனெடு தேவர்கள்
திருத்துஞ் சேவடி யான்திக ழுந்நகர்
ஒருத்தி பாகம் உகந்தவன் வாஞ்சியம்
அருத்தி யாலடை வார்க்கில்லை யல்லலே.

It is said that Saint Arunagirinathar had also offered worship here.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary priests. The temple own both antique and modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 22,000 of which the costly gold Kasumalai and the stone studded "Netri pattam" of the Goddess deserve special mention. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 3·407 acres of wet and 89·94 acres of dry lands apart from four houses which fetch an annual income of Rs. 64,600 by way of rent; this sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. The temple is also maintaining a rest house for the convenience and stay of the pilgrims. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 200 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 300 per annum. The temple has a big car (Ther), a silver rishabam and several ancient vahanas viz., yali, yama, kamadhenu, horse, swan, parrot, ajah etc., all made of wood. Of these, the Yama vahanam is the most important one.

Brahmothsavam in Karthigai, Masi Bharani, Adi Pooram, Navarathri and Karthigai Sundays are the regular annual festivals oberved by the temple. Of these, the Karthigai Sundays and the Masi Bharani are the most important ones celebrated with great eclat.

Legend has it that Yama, the God of death offered worship to the presiding deity here and received His blessings. It is therefore, believed that those living here and those who worship the Lord are freed from the pangs of sufferings and agony that usually preceed death. The name of the place Srivanjiyam is derived from the fact that Lord Vishnu Joind Sri Lakshmi after worship here.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUKONDEESWARAM

Sri Pasupatheeswaraswamy Temple

Thirukondeeswaram (with a population of 935) which is at a distance of about two kilometres from Nannilam railway station has derived its importance mainly from its Siva temple dedicated to Sri Pasupatheeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort is known as Santha Nayagi. This ancient temple of Pasupatheeswarar is situated in pleasant surroundings. It is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train. The temple is said to have been built more than thousand years ago.

The temple facing east covers an area of about 57 cents and commands a grand view. It has a single prakaram, two sancta and two vimanams. There are as many as eighteen artistically carved stone pillars in the Mahamandapam. The sacred tank in front of the temple is popularly called " Ratha Pushkarani " or " Ksheera Pushkarani ". It is now in a completely neglected condition. There is a separate shrine for Sri Vinayagar. The Moolavar Pasupatheeswarar is represented by a two feet high Swayambu Lingam facing east. His divine consort Santha Nayagi Amman in a separate sanctum

is situated in a standing posture facing south. Her monolithic image is exquisitely carved out and is about four and half feet in height. It is said that Saint Appar had visited this shrine and composed about twenty sacred verses in praise of the Lord here.

There are several interesting stone inscriptions. One of them records that King Krishna Devaraya of Vijayanagar made rich endowments to the temple in 1517 A.D. in commemoration of his victory over King Thirumalairayan of Udayagiri. From another inscription it is learnt that handsome gifts of cattle were made by Chola Kings with instructions to keep ghee lamps burning in the temple round the clock.

Poojas are performed four times daily by hereditary priests. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 17·95 acres of wet and 8·73 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 4,400 by way of rent. This amount is spent for its upkeep and general maintenance. There are three ancient vahanas, viz., peacock, swan and bandicoot, all made of wood.

Thiruvadhirai, Adi Pooram, Thai Poosam, Navarathri and Karthigai Guruvaram are the major festivals observed by the temple of which the Karthigai Guruvaram is the most important one when about 500 devotees from the neighbouring villages congregate.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

Legend has it that a cow felt she was the bride of Lord Siva. She gored the earth with her horns in the hope that once she got herself dehorned, the Lord would be pleased to accept her in wedlock. The horns of the cow pierced the top of the Lingam underneath and blood gushed forth and the cow triumphed. There is on the Lingam a 4" deep scar believed to have been made by the cow's horns. The Lord thus revealed His presence and the cow was transformed into Parvathi, His consort. The Lord is hence called Pasupathees-

warar. The word 'Kondi' denotes cow and the place has acquired its name of Thirukondeeswaram from this interesting episode.

KOOTHANUR

Sri Sarswathiambal Temple

Situated near Poonthottam railway station, Koothanur with a population of 1,629 enjoys the distinction of being one of the very few places having a shrine for the Goddess of knowledge, Sri Saraswathiambal. This is an ancient shrine. The place is situated on the Mayuram-Thiruthuraipoondi route.

The tiny shrine covers an area of about five cents. It has a single prakaram, a sanctum sanctorum and a vimanam. The presiding deity of this shrine, Goddess Saraswathiambal is in a sitting posture. The festival idol is artistically interesting.

Poojas are performed three times a day by hereditary priests. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 200 all donated by devotees. There is thirty year old beautiful swan vahanam here, made of wood.

Vijayadhasami (i.e., Saraswathi Pooja) is the only important festival celebrated with great eclat when about 200 devotees from the neighbouring villages congregate here.

A single Trustee appointed by the villagers is in charge of this privately managed temple.

The place is associated with the famous Tamil poet Ottakoothar. There is a story which runs thus :

Once a young man aspiring to acquire knowledge was asked to do penance to invoke Saraswathi's blessings at this

village situated on the bank of the Arasalar river. Saraswathi, moved by the earnestness of the young man's prayers, appeared before him one day in the guise of a Deva-dasi and asked him to receive Her blessings. But the devotee was shocked and he refused to accept the blessings from such a woman. This strange news reached the ears of the Poet Ottakoothar who was just then having his bath in the nearby river. He at once rushed to this place and knowing who the Dasi really was, prostrated himself before Her. The Goddess graciously blessed him and also the boy. From then onwards the fame of Ottakoothar spread far and wide.

The poet himself erected a small beautiful shrine at this site dedicated to the Goddess and celebrated every year the Dasara festival in Her honour. The temple is said to be in existence for over 1,000 years. The antiquity of this temple is also confirmed by the stone inscriptions found in the temple. The place Koothanur came to be called after Poet Ottakoothar. The Maha Kumbabishegam of the temple was last celebrated in the year 1941.

THIRUKKANNAPURAM

Sri Sowriraja Perumal Temple

Thirukkannapuram with a population of 2,040 is a famous Vaishnavite centre situated eight kilometres east of Nannilam railway station in Thanjavur district. The place can easily be reached by bus also.

The famous Vaishnavite temple dedicated to Lord Sowriraja Perumal was built in 1200 A. D. and it contains some interesting inscriptions. There is also a small Siva temple dedicated to Ramanadhiswarar at Thirukkannapuram. Thirukkannapuram is considered to be specially sacred as the presiding deity Sri Sowriraja Perumal is believed to be in the form of "*Ashtakshara Manthra Swaroopam*" (a combi-

nation of the spiritual significance of the various forms of the Lord in other holy places). Hence it is believed that those who offer worship to the Lord of this place will derive all the benefits of having performed the 'Ashtakshara Manthra Japam'. This place is also considered as the Eastern Gate of Sri Ranganathar of Srirangam in Tiruchi district.

The Lord of this place is also identified as Neelamega Perumal and His divine consort is known as Kannapura Nayagi. Saint Nammalwar has eulogised the Lord in 'Thirumozhi'.

The temple measures 316 feet east to west and 210 feet south to north roughly occupying an area of 1·50 acres. The Rajagopuram at the front entrance to the temple is about 100 feet high and presents an imposing appearance. The massive walls of the temple are said to have been demolished gradually during local disturbances.

The huge temple tank 'Nithya Pushkarani' in front of the temple is considered to be a sacred one. As one enters the Rajagopuram and crosses the inner tower which is about 60 feet high one comes to the sannadhi of Alwars where the idols of the great Vaishnavite saints have been installed. Close to the Sannadhi of Alwars there is a separate sanctum for Vibishna who is seen with his hands folded in supplication before the sanctum of Sri Rama. After worshipping all these shrines, one enters the Mahamandapam and then one to the sanctum sanctorum where the Lord gives His striking darshan in standing posture. Before the Moolavar the festival idol of Sri Sowrirajar is seen with His consorts.

A scar just above the right eyebrow of the Moolavar is worth observing and also the 'Chakkaram' in 'Prayoga' form. It is said that this scar was the result of being hit on the forehead by a devotee who struck the Lord with a plate for His inaction when the temple walls were being demolished. The Lord after being hit used his Chakkara to chase the evil doers. Hence the Chakkaram is still seen in the 'Prayoga' form. In the sanctum sanctorum, one can see the Garuda (Peria Thiruvadi) and Tandaga Maharishi worshipping the Lord. Unlike in

other temples, the Vimanam over the sanctum sanctorum is not visible to us. The vimanam is of special significance here in as much as sages and saints are supposed to mediate there. This place is therefore known as "Vaikuntam" (Heaven) on earth. There is a separate temple for Goddess Kannapura Nayagi.

Sri Sowriraja's glory had been sung by Peryalwar, Kulasekhara Alwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Nammalwar and Sri Andal. Kulasekhara Alwar particularly worshipped the Lord as one who took the 'Avathara' of Sri Rama. Thirumangai Alwar has rendered as many as 104 verses out of a total of 129 verses by all the Alwars.

The legend goes to say that Vibishna who is supposed to have installed Lord Ranganathar in Srirangam wanted to worship the Lord in his walking pose, but the Lord having already reclined on Adhisesha, blessed Vibishna to have his desire fulfilled at Thirukkannapuram where He gave him the beautiful darshan. Even today it is believed that on all the New Moon days, Lord Sowrirajar is givingr His darshan to Vibishna.

There is also a legend to the effect that the Lord of this place married the daughter of King Vasu of Surya Vamsa, called Padmini.

Besides 'Nithya Pushkarani', there are three other holy waters in this place viz., Boothavada Theertham, Ananthabila Theertham and Mukthagaram. It is said these waters are very sacred and confer on those who take bath all prosperity. It is said that Indra washed off the sin of Brahminicide by worshipping the Lord Sowriraja Perumal of this place.

Poojas are performed six times a day by hereditary priests.

The temple has got jewels worth about Rs. 1,98,000 which are said to be antique.

The temple has also got 261 acres of both wet and dry lands besides a rest house and another building. The approximate annual income is estimated at Rs. 42,000 which is

utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple and also for conducting the periodical festivals.

There are quite a number of vahanas of which Hanuman, horse, garuda and Surya Prabhai are made of silver.

Several festivals are conducted of which the Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi, Mahothsavam in Masi and Athyayana Uthsavam in Margazhi months are noteworthy. During the Mahothsavam, the deity is taken to Thirumalairayanpattinam sea shore, by the fishermen worshipping the Lord : it is believed that He married a Sembadava girl and gave her Moksham. Hence the Lord of this place is affectionately called as Mappillaiswami by the fishermen community.

THIRUPPAYATHANGUDI

Sri Thiruppayathanathaswamy Temple

Thiruppayathangudi, a village with a population of 665 is situated at about seven kilometres from Virgudi railway station. It is understood that this temple was built by Raja Raja Chola II. In the recent past, it was renovated by a devotee and the last Kumbabishegam was performed in 1957. The temple is surrounded by verdant groves. On the southern side, river Vilappar is flowing. The temple is facing east.

Thiruppayathanathar, a Swayambu Lingam, is the presiding deity of this temple. He is also known as Mukthapureeswarar in Sanskrit.

Sri Kaviyankanni is the Goddess, otherwise known as Nethrambigai in Sanskrit. Sri Chandrasekharar and Sri Somaskandhar are festival deities. Siddhi Vinayagar's shrine is situated inside the temple on the southern side facing east. Subramaniar with his consorts Valli and Deivayanai, Sri Visalakshi, Sri Viswanathar, Mahalakshmi, Gajalakshmi, Chandikeswarar and Veeramakali are the other important

deities in this temple. There are two separate sancta for Sri Dhandapani and Sri Somaskandhar. Sri Natarajar with His consort Sivakami Ammal is situated in the Maha Mandapam.

The presiding deity Thiruppayathanathar and Goddess Kaviankanni are known for their greatness. The holy water of this place is Karuna Theertham. It is believed that those who take a dip in this tank and then pray to the Goddess will be relieved of their eye trouble, if any.

There are some inscriptions on the walls of the temple from which it is learnt that lands were endowed to the temple by a devotee who was relieved of his eye trouble.

The temple occupies 42 cents of land. There is one copper Naga Kavacham for the presiding deity and a silver Kavacham for the Goddess. There are some beautiful vahanams like peacock, bandicoot (Moonjuru), rishabam, horse, goat, sooran and swan in the temple.

Bairavar, it is believed, prayed here and attained salvation. Saint Appar has sung hymns in praise of this temple. There are four poojas daily, performed by a Sivachariar. Sivanthi Tree is the Sthala Viruksham.

There is an interesting legend about this Lord. Once there was a merchant who was a keen devotee of Lord Siva. He was a pepper merchant. In the course of the transport of the goods he had to pass through a toll-gate where tax was levied particularly on pepper. With a view to avoid paying tax, he hit upon a scheme. He prayed to God to change the commodity into green gram which was not taxable and to his surprise he found that his pepper was transformed into green gram. After crossing the toll-gate the green gram was again transformed into pepper and he earned a huge sum out of them. However, he could not lead a peaceful life. He endowed all his properties to the temple and started leading a simple and pious life.

The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated for a day in Vaikasi every year. Due to financial difficulties, it has been stopped for the present. Special Poojas are performed on the four Fridays in the month of Adi.

The temple owns about 133·49 acres of wet and 3·78 acres of dry lands. The annual income of this temple is about Rs. 2,000. An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and three Trustees are managing the Administration of this temple.

THIRUMARUGAL

Sri Rathnagireeswarar Temple

Thirumarugal is situated at a distance of eleven kilometres east of Nannilam railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi railway line. The place can also be reached by bus. Its population according to 1961 Census is 3,311.

Thirumarugal is one of the sacred Saivite centres sung in Thevaram. Its renowned fame is dedicated to Sri Rathnagireeswarar who is also known as Manickavannar. It is surrounded on all sides by other famous Saivite centres like Thiruppugalur, Thiruchchengattangudi and Thiruchchathamangai which were all visited by saints-Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar.

The exact age of the temple is not known. But it is said that this temple was built by Chola Kings. According to the Sthalapuranam, the temple was built by Chola King, Kochchengannan. It is said that one Sri Vairavan Chettiar of Devakottai had carried out extensive renovations during the year 1960-1962.

The Moolavar, a Swayambu Lingam was found by a king called Kusakethu at the time of reclamation of the jungle

and he is said to have established this deity at this place. The temple has two prakarams (corridors) with a Rajagopuram, sixty-eight feet high. The sanctum sanctorum is located on an artificial hillock. In the outer prakaram there is a Vinayagar Temple on the southern side. This Vinayagar is known as '*Juram Theertha Vinayagar*' (Vinayagar who cured fever). The legend about this goes to say that there was a King who was suffering from severe fever and that he was cured of his fever after taking a vow to worship this Vinayagar. Even now it is believed that this Vinayagar is relieving the distress of His devotees suffering from various diseases. On the northern prakaram, there is another Vinayagar who is known as Santhana Vinayagar. Just opposite to this, there is a sanctum for Lord Siva who is known as Piravidayar and His consort as Soundaranayagi. The shrines of Somaskandhar, Murugar, Vinayagar, Dakshinamurthi, sixty-three Nayanmars and the Navagrahas have been installed in the inner prakaram.

The name Thirumarugal (Lakshmi's rejoining) is said to have been derived from a legend that Goddess Lakshmi joined Her husband Vishnu at this place after a short separation, thanks to the help of Lord Siva. The village is also supposed to have been the place of the school attended by Sirala (Siruthondar's son). Its site is now occupied by a Ganapathi Temple (Visham Theertha Vinayagar) and the Devasthanam Office. The residents of Thirumarugal were great devotees of the Sirala Temple at Thiruchchengattangudi. They had endowed lands for conducting the festival of Siruthonda Nayanar. They had even laid out a road for taking a procession of Sirala Deva to their village.

Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this place and sung in praise of the deity. Gnanasambandhar is said to have restored to life a Chettiar youth who ran away with his beloved from Kaviripumpattinam and was bitten by a snake at this place.

The two holy waters of this place are Lakshmi Theertham and Siralan Tank. Great significance is attached to the bath

in these waters on certain days. It is believed that those who take bath in Lakshmi-Theertham on *Varalakshmi Nonbu* day and worship Lord Manickavannar will be relieved of their financial difficulties. It is also believed that people who have no children will be blessed if they take bath in the Siralan Tank on the New Moon days. The Sthala Viruksham of this place is Plantain Tree.

Poojas are performed five times a day by hereditary priests.

The temple has got jewels worth Rs. 7,500 which are all antique. It has also got 187 acres of wet and 7 acres of dry lands besides five houses which have been leased out. The annual income is roughly estimated at Rs. 35,000 which is being utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple besides conduct of periodical festivals.

There are a number of vahanas made of wood and a big ratham which are used during the festivals. A number of festivals are also conducted of which the Chithira Pournami festival is said to be the important one.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Board of Trustees besides an Executive Officer to look after the administration of the temple.

KEERANOOR

Sri Sivaloganathaswamy Temple

This temple situated in Keeranoor is about two kilometres from Kollumangudi railway station on Mayuram-Thiruvarur line. The population of this place is 1,560 according to 1961 Census.

This is said to be an ancient temple which was built by a Chola King. There are three prakarams in this temple.

The temple walls have some inscriptions. The front gopuram is twenty-five feet high with two tiers and five copper Kalasams. Sri Sivaloganathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam is the presiding deity and the Goddess is known as Sri Ksheerambigai.

Five poojas are performed by a Saivite Brahmin daily. This temple owns some antique and modern jewels worth about Rs. 6,000. The temple is getting about Rs. 10,000 as annual income through its property of about seventy acres of wet lands.

There are one wooden car and seven mounts which are used during festivals. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated for ten days in the month of Chithirai. Tamil New Year's Day, Adi Pooram, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Avani Moolam, Navarathiri and Skandha Sashti are the other annual festivals celebrated.

There is a legend concerning the construction of the temple according to which a Chola King once came to this place on a horse. One of the heels of his horse hit a stone there and left a blood stain. The King had a direction from Lord Siva in his dream to construct a temple at the place where his horse had left a mark. Accordingly the King constructed the temple.

There is another legend to the effect that Lord Agni got rid of his curse by visiting and worshipping the deity of this place.

An Executive Officer and a single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

SIRUPULIYUR

Sri Kripasamudra Perumal Temple

Sirupuliyur which is hailed as one of the 108 important Vaishnavite shrines is situated about two kilometres from

Kollumangudi, the nearest railway station. Bala Vyagrapuram and Chala Sayanam are the two other names of this village. Its population according to 1961 Census is 1,368. Thirumangai Alwar has sung "*Pasurams*" in praise of this Lord.

This ancient temple with a Rajagopuram 75 feet high faces south. At the entrance to the Rajagopuram, there is an image of Hanumar. There are two prakarams in this temple. The shrines of Andal and Garuda Alwar, the Dwajasthambam and Bali Peedam are in the second prakaram. The second gopuram is a small one, twenty-five feet tall with three storeys. After crossing this, Chokkattan mandapam is reached. On the western side, there is a shrine for Gopalar and on the eastern side is the "Sorga Vasal".

The presiding deity, Aruma Kadalamudhan is in the "Bala Sayanam" pose. The festival deity is called Kripasamudra Perumal or Saranakatha-rakshakar. The divine consort of the Lord is known as Dayanayaki. The ten avatars of Vishnu and the images of twelve Alwars in different colours have been painted on the walls of the first prakaram. The Pasurams sung by Thirumangai Alwar are also written here. On the northern side of the second prakaram, the temple of the Goddess is situated facing east.

Thiruvanantha Pushkarani and Manasa Pushkarani are the two holy tanks of this temple. As Thiruvanantha Alwar is said to have performed penance on this bank bund it was named after him. Manasa Pushkarani is on the eastern side of the temple. There is a belief that one who take a dip in Thiruvanantha Pushkarani and prays to Lord Kripasamudra Perumal will derive all prosperity.

Sirupuliyur is known as Chala Sayanam. It is said that those who performed penance in this place got what they desired. It is believed that God gave darshan in Bala Sayanam pose to Kannuva Munivar and Bala Munivar or Pulikkal Munivar. The images of these two saints are seen at the feet of the presiding deity. The place is held sacred by Saivites also.

This temple was renovated and Kumbabishegams were performed twice in 1896 and 1935. There are a number of figures on the gopuram depicting the scenes from puranas. The Vimanam over the sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity resembles a flower. The festival and other deities reveal exquisite workmanship.

Daily seven poojas are performed. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated for ten days in the month of Vaikasi. Besides several other festivals are also conducted.

The temple owns about 289·49 acres of wet lands and 82·78 acres of dry lands and derives about Rs. 56,000 annually. The temple is providing midday meals for the school going children.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed an Executive Officer and three Trustees to look after its administration.

PERALAM

Sri Swayambunathaswamy Temple

This very ancient temple, centrally situated in the village and surrounded by high compound walls is to the north-east of Peralam railway station. The population of this place is 3,822. The temple occupies an area of about five acres of land. The Lingam here is Swayambu. The festival deity is about three feet high. Sri Somaskandhar, Ambal, Nalvar, Vinayagar and Subramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai are the other festival dieties. The Lingam is slightly inclined. The presiding deity is called Swayambunathaswamy and the Goddess Bhavani. Swayambeswari is another name of the divine consort.

Agni Theertham, Chandra Theertham and Surya Theertham are the three important theerthams (holy waters) in this temple. There is a belief that if one has a dip in Chandra Theertham, he will have no rebirth.

The whole temple is built of brick. The Rajagopuram with five tiers, vimanam, Garba Graham, Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam were all renovated and the last Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1959 by the head of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee. There are five poojas daily. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated in Panguni for ten days. Besides, Navarathri, Avani Moolam, Thiruvadhirai, Adi Pooram, Skandha Sashti and Karthigai Deepam are the other festivals.

The temple owns about 262·62 acres of wet land, 70·58 acres of dry land and five houses. The annual income of this temple is about Rs. 36,000. There are some antique gold and silver jewels worth about Rs. 12,000. A number of mounts are utilised during festivals. The head of the Dharmapura Adheenam is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

There is a legend that Saint Karshanajini who desired to worship all the Lingams in this world here performed penance. The Lord gave darshan to him saying that if he performed pooja here, all the names of the Lingams would be found on the wall of the temple. Hence the place is called *Peralam* (Per + Alam).

Another story relating to the etymology of the name of the village is that Saint Perala had performed penance here, and place was named after him.

THIRUVEEZHIMIZHALAI

Sri Vizhinathaswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of about ten kilometres north-west of Nannilam, Thiruvizhimizhalai with a population of 1,936

is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Vizhinathaswamy.

The temple which covers an area of about four acres has a seven-tiered Rajagopuram in the front with five Kalasams at its top. Several additions and renovations were made by the head of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam to this ancient shrine some sixty years ago. There are many inscriptions here which have been copied covering a wide range of interesting materials.

There are three prakarams and two sancta apart from several beautiful mandapams like the hundred pillared mandapam. This shrine has a curious porch of an unusual shape which is popularly called the "Bat's face mandapam". Shrines of Tamil Saints are also found within the temple precincts and gifts have been made for the recital of their works. There are as many as twenty-five sacred Theerthams here of which the Pushkarani Theertham, Vishnu Theertham, Brahma Theertham, Padma Theertham, Imaya Theertham, Markandeya Theertham, Pathiravalli Theertham, Manu Theertham, Abimuktha Theertham, Thriveni Sangamam and Samudra Theertham are the important ones. Jack Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here.

The presiding deity of the temple Sri Vizhinathar is a Swayambu Lingam facing east. His divine consort is known as Sundara Kujhambigai. There are several festival deities here, viz., Lord Natarajar, Somaskandhar, Chandrasekharar, Chakradhanar, Bikshadanar, Kalasamharar, Swargavadhanesar and sixty-three Nayanmars, made of bronze. The bronze idol of Mahavishnu reveals good workmanship. It is said that Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had a darshan of the Lord here in His "Thiruthoni Vimanam" just as in Sirkali at his own request. Saint Appar and Sundarar have also visited this shrine and composed several sacred verses in praise of the Lord.

Poojas are performed five times daily by hereditary priests. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 10,000 mostly donated by devotees. The

immovable properties of the temple comprise about 191·27 acres of wet and 129·07 acres of dry lands apart from 29·59 acres of vacant plots and 110 coconut trees which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 40,000 to the temple by way of rent. This sum is utilised for payment of salaries to the temple servants and to the day-to-day activities of the temple. There are several ancient vahanas, viz., rishabam, lion, yali, bhootham, bandicoot, peacock and elephant, all made of wood.

Brahmothsavam in Chithirai, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Thiruvadhirai, Karthigai Deepam and Sivarathri are the major festivals of the temple. Of these, the ten day Brahmothsavam in Chithirai is celebrated with great eclat when about 3,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

The affairs of the temple are managed by the Adheena-kartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the hereditary Trustee of the temple.

There are two interesting legends about this temple. One of these says that Lord Vishnu with a view to obtain the powerful "Chakkara" from Lord Siva was worshipping the Lord of this place, offering one thousand lotus flowers daily. One day he found that one flower was missing and in order to make good this deficiency, He plucked out one of his own eyes to offer to the Lord. Lord Siva was so pleased by this that He granted Vishnu the "Chakkara" He wanted. *Thiruvizhi* or holy eye in the name Thiruvizhimalai is said to refer to this legend and the presiding deity here is also, therefore, known as Vizhinathar. The other legend says that Saints Appar and Sambandhar were each presented by the Lord with a gold coin to feed their followers when a famine broke out. The pillar on which the coin is said to have been placed is seen even now. It is said that Lord Brahma, Rathi Devi, Sages Kathyayanar and Manu, the famous Kings Swethakethu, Sibi Chakravarthi and Pururavas and the holy cow Kamadhenu worshipped the Lord here and attained eternal bliss. There is a reference in the Siva Puranam about the greatness of this shrine.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are represented in epigrahs.

CHOLA :

Parantaka I (907-953 A.D.)
Uthama Chola (970-985 A.D.)
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A.D.)
Rajendra I (1012 - 1044 A.D.)
Rajadhi Raja (1018 - 1054 A.D.)
Kulothunga I (1070 A.D.)
Vikrama Chola (1118-1120 A.D.)
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A.D.)
Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A.D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1253 A.D.)
Rajendra III (1246-1279 A.D.)

PANDYA : Jatavarman Sundarapandya.
Jatavarman Virapandya.

VIJAYANAGARA: Viravirupanna Udaiyar (14th century).

VILLAGE : The village is called Thiruvilimilalai, a devatana village in Vennadu, a sub-division of Uyyakkondar Vala Nadu. The sub-division Uyyakkondar Vala Nadu is also called Ulaguyyak-konda-chola-vala-nadu.

DEITY : The main deity of the temple is called Thiruvilimilalai Udaiyar and Udaiyar and Thiruvilimilalai Udaiya-mahadeva. The Goddess is referred to as Pidariar.

STRUCTURES : Three earliest inscriptions to be found on the main temple is dated in 31st regnal year of Rajadhi Raja. Hence the structure should have come into existence before that period. The mandapam in front of the shrine should have come into existence before Thirteenth Century as it bears inscriptions of Sundarapandya. The first prakaram should

also be assigned to that period as it bears epigraphs from the reign of Kulothunga II onwards. A few pillars in the inner verandah carry inscriptions of Raja Raja II and Rajendra I. Evidently the pillars belonged to an earlier structure now rebuilt. During the 34th year of Kulothunga III, the temple of Chandikeswara was built of stone. The Ganesa shrine in the temple bears an inscription of Raja Raja III and refers to the temple of Sivalokanathamudaiya Nayanar at Jayamkonda Cholanallur. The Moolasthaneswara shrine may be assigned to Thirteenth Century A. D. as it bears an inscription of Kulothunga III.

A number of inscriptions on the Amman shrine range from the reign of Parantaka I to Rajendra I. The inscriptions refer to the temple of Thiruttantori Battarar. Evidently this temple existed as a Siva temple from the reign of Parantaka, but has been converted into an Amman shrine later. The inner gopuram is to be assigned to the period of Raja Raja I as it bears his inscriptions. The second gopuram bears an epigraph of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya and may be assigned to Twelfth Century A. D. while the third gopuram bearing an inscription of Raja Raja III who probably built in Thirteenth Century A. D.

One of the inscriptions dated in the thirty-sixth year of probably Rajadhi Raja I records the gift of tiles covered with gold to the temple of Thiruvilimilalai Udaiya Mahadeva.. One of the donors was Vijayarajendradeva Anukkiyar, Pallavan Pattalinangai. Probably the temple was originally a tiled structure covered with gold like the Chidambaram Temple.

During the 31st year of Raja Raja III, land and a house were gifted to an architect for reparing a shrine of Ninarulina Nayanar and Nerivar Kuzhali Nachiyar in the same temple. A temple dedicated to Thiruchchuvargam Udaiyar at Thiruvilimilai is mentioned in an inscription of Kulothunga III. A shrine of Parvadisvaramudaiyar in the first parkaram of the temple is referred to in the reign of the same king. Another shrine dedicated to Thiruvegambamudaiyar is said to have existed in the same prakaram in the reign of Raja Raja III.

An image of Thiruvadhavurdeva was set up in the third prakaram of the temple in the reign of the above king.

A number of Mathas are also referred to in inscriptions. A Matha named Alagiya Thiruchitrambalamudaiyar Matha was constructed in the village by a certain Jnavasivan who was the disciple of Thiruchattimurratt Mudaliyar of the Thirugnanasambandha Thirumadam in the reign of Rajendra III. Another Matha named Thirunavukkarasu Matha in the same village is referred to in the reign of Rajendra II during the 18th year of the same king. Another Matha is said to have been constructed on the northern side of the same temple.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandya gifted lands for the benefit of the Mathas and minor shrines in the temple. A pavilion called Thirukkaikottai was constructed in the temple during the reign of the King Narasingadeva (probably Hoysala Narasimha) for reciting Thirumurai hymns for which lands were gifted in the reign of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya. In the reign of Raja Raja III, provisions were made for singing Thiruppodingam hymns. A pillar in the Sundara Kujhambal shrine records the setting up of an image of Krishna and the gift of land for its worship. Another pillar in the same place records that the mother of Rajendrachola Anukkuapallava-royar gifted a copper image of Alagiya Manavala.

A merchant of Kaviripumpattinam gifted land for a flower garden to the temple in the reign of Vijayanagara ruler Viruppanna Udaiyar. A certain Vanyanpadan alias Arikula-kesari Vilupparaiyan is said to have gifted a sword (val) called Sri Kalakalan to the temple, probably in the reign of Rajendra I.

VADAGUDI

Sri Mahalingaswamy Temple

The very ancient Sri Mahalingaswamy Temple in Vadagudi is situated about six kilometres from Nannilam railway

station. The population of this village is 1,091 according to 1961 Census. The temple faces east. There is no gopuram in this temple. It has only one prakaram. The presiding deity Sri Mahalingaswamy and the Goddess Sri Brahat Sundara Kujhambigai are having separate sancta. The icons of Dhakshinamurthy, Vinayagar, Subramanyar, Chandikeswarar and Nandhi in the prakaram also have separate sancta. The temple occupies only an area of seven cents. The Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1960.

There is an interesting legend about the origin of this temple. Once upon a time, a devotee of this place used to go to Mathiarjunam (Thiruvidaimarudhur) by walk daily to worship Lord Mahalingeswarar. On account of ill health, he could not go to Thiruvidaimarudhur one day and when he was feeling sorry for his inability, Lord Mahalingeswarar appeared in his dream and informed him that thereafter he need not go to Tiruvidaimarudhur and that He will give darshan in his village itself. Accordingly Lord Siva settled in this place as Mahalingaswamy. This place is known as "Dhakshina Mathiyarjunam" in the Puranam.

The presiding deity is an installed Lingam. The divine consort, Sri Brahath Sundara Kujhambigai is in a standing posture facing south. The Mahamandapam is in front of the presiding deity. Lord Subramanya with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai are installed in this mandapam. The festival deities of Mahalingaswamy, Sundara Kujhambigai, Manickavasagar, Dakshinamurthy, Vinayagar, Subramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai and Nandhi are all made of bronze.

There are only two poojas daily, one in the morning and another in the evening. The temple owns about 5·19 acres of wet lands and 1·57 acres of dry lands. The annual income of this temple is only about Rs. 700. Kirthigai, New Years' Day, Vijaya Dhasami, Navarathri, Sivarathri, Pradhosham and Skandha Shasti are the festivals celebrated in this temple. The temple is administered by a single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

AMBAL

Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy Temple

Ambal village is famous for the shrine of Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy. It is situated about four kilometres from Poonthottam railway station. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 2,592.

Of the 274 " Padal Petra Sthalams ", 127 are situated on the southern side of the river Cauvery and the temple at Ambal is one among this.

The presiding deity of this temple is Sri Brahmapureeswarar and His consort is ' Poonkuzhal Nayagi ' known in Sanskrit as ' Sugandha Kunthalambigai '. Six poojas are performed in Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy Temple according to Kamika Agamam.

The temple is very ancient having been constructed about 2,000 years ago. This temple was renovated by many former rulers of the region. There are a few inscriptions, on the temple walls. The Rajagopuram is fifty feet high.

The icons of Sri Natarajar, Sri Vinayagar, Brahma, Sri Subramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai, Somaskandhar, Chandreskharar and the Saivite saints are kept in separate enclosures. Mention must be made of the fine image of Siva-Parvathi seen resting over the Bull (Nandhi). Goddess Sugandha Kunthalambigai is enshrined in a separate temple.

The temple occupies 93 cents of land. It owns about 213·30 acres of wet lands, 73·32 acres of dry lands and three houses. The antique jewels and the silver articles are worth about Rs. 5,800. The temple is deriving an annual income of Rs. 42,000.

There is another small temple dedicated to Sri Sattanathaswamy. There is also a Perumal Temple. There is an idol of

Kali in the Vishnu Temple which, it is said, is untouched while performing pooja.

The sacred well in the Sattanathar Temple is called " Soola Theertham ". Ambal has the distinction of having been the abode of a pious woman called " Ambar Silambi " who was very hospitable to Kamban and Avvai. The poet and the poetess have beautifully sung Her praise.

This is also said to be the birth place of *Somasimara Nayanar*, one of the Sixty-three Saivite Nayanmars who performed a great ' Yagna ' at this place. It is said that Lord Siva Himself was present at the Yagna to receive " *Avirbagham* ".

According to a legend, Brahma is said to have offered worship to the Lord in the form of a bird and got rid of his curse.

The Magham festival celebrated in the month of Masi is an important one.

The Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Endowments (Administration) Department and five Trustees are managing the temple. There is one hereditary Trustee for Sri Sattanathaswamy Temple.

THIRUPPANAIYUR

VADAGARAI VATTAM

Sri Soundareswararswamy Temple

Thiruppanaiyur in Vadagarai Panchayat is situated at a distance of three kilometres south-east of Nannilam railway station. The place can also be reached by bus from Mayavaram and Thiruvarur. The population of Vadagarai according to 1961 Census is 1,609.

The place is noted for its small but ancient Siva temple. The temple is dedicated to Lord Soundareswara Swamy and His divine consort is known as Perianayagi.

The shrine was built by Chola Kings. It is said that Thiruppanaiyur is the birth place of Karikala Chola and the temple was built during his period. There is a story that Karikala Chola was born under a Palmyrah Tree (Panai Maram) which is the Sthala Viruksham of the temple. The child was growing under the shade of this tree and Lord Vinayagar took care of the child when the King directed the royal elephant to bring the heir. Apparently the elephant picked up this child and produced it before the King. There is a rare specimen of a Palymrah Tree in the temple; it has branches.

Poojas are performed thrice a day. The temple has got about 18·47 acres of both wet and dry lands which have been leased out and the lease amount is utilised for its maintenance. The annual income of the temple is estimated at Rs. 2,000.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Trustee for managing its affairs.

THIRUVIRKUDI

Sri Veeratteswaraswamy Temple

Situated at a distance of eight kilometres north of Thiruvarur railway station, Thiruvirkudi with a population of 828 is one of the 127 sacred Saivite centres on the southern bank of the Cauvery. This place is considered specially sacred as it is one of the eight places (Ashta-Veerattams) where Lord Siva is supposed to have exhibited His might.

Thiruvirkudi with its temple dedicated to Sri Veeratteswaraswamy is surrounded by important Saivite centres like Nannilam on the north-west, Thiruppanaiyur and Thiruppugalur on the north, Thirup-ayathangudi, Thiruchchengattangudi and Thirumarugal on the east, Thiruppalli Mukkudal on the south, Thiruvarur on the south-west and Thiruvanjiyam on the west which are all "Padal Petra Sthalams". This holy place is also called "*Thittai*". Topographically this place is on a higher level situated in between two rivers.

The temple is situated right in the heart of the village facing west. Of the eight Ashtaveerattams, the temple faces west in six places; Thiruvirkudi is one of these six. The two other places in which the temple is facing east are Thiruvazhuvur and Thiruvadhigai.

The temple has been in existence from immemorial. The exact age of the temple is not known. But extensive renovations are said to have been carried out by one Meyyappa Chettiar and his descendants of Pallathur, Ramnad District during the years 1917 to 1931. Saint Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have sung in praise of this deity.

The temple measures 302 feet east to west and 151 feet south to north—roughly occupying an area of one acre. It has two corridors (Prakarams) and an imposing tower (gopuram) about 200 feet high. Just in front of the temple is the temple tank known as "Sangu Theertham". On the eastern side of the temple is the other tank known as Sakkara Theertham. The Amman temple is situated on the western side of the second prakaram. The festival deity is located on the northern corridor. The shrines of 'Navagrahas', Surya and Chandra are located on the eastern prakaram. The idols of Saints Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar are installed on the southern corridor. The Vinayagar Temple and festival deities are installed on the southern half of the western corridor. Besides these, the shrines of Lakshmi, Subramaniar, Bairavar, Saturn, Durgai, Chandikeswarar, Dakshinamurthy, Narthana Vinayagar, Natarajar, Brahma and Mahavishnu have also been installed. The installation of the

shrines of Pidari and Mariamman is a notable feature of this place.

Lord Veeratteswarar, a Swayambu Lingam is the presiding deity of this temple who blesses His ardent worshippers. Veerattanam represents a place where the Lord has played a mighty role. Legend says that Lord Siva killed a demon by name 'Jalandaran' in this place. Hence Lord Veeratteswarar of this place is also identified as Jalandarari. The divine consort is known as Elavar Kuzhali. She is also identified as 'Maivar Kuzhali', and 'Parimala Nayagi'.

Thulasi plant is considered sacred in this temple.

Four poojas are performed every day. The temple has got about forty acres of both wet and dry lands which fetch an income of Rs. 3,000 per annum. The income is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple.

There are two vahanas, a bandicoot and a swan made of wood besides jewels worth Rs. 300. The temple is under the management of a Trustee, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KODAVASAL

Sri Koneswaraswamy Temple

Kodavasal is situated at a distance of sixteen kilometres from Nannilam and the nearest railway station is Koradacheri. The place is accessible by bus also. The population of this city Panchayat, according to 1961 Census is 8,148.

The temple is an ancient one. It is dedicated to Lord Koneswaraswamy. His divine consort is known as Perianayagi Amman. There is a separate sanctum for Sri Subramaniaswamy. The temple is said to have been constructed by

the Chola King, Kochchengannam. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this temple and sung in praise of the deity. Saint Arunagirinathar is also said to have sung in praise of Sri Subramania Swamy of this place.

The presiding deity (Lingam) is believed to have been installed by sages. The Lingam is six feet in height. There are two prakarams. The temple has a tower which is about 80 feet in height.

Five poojas are performed every day by Brahmin Gurukkals. There are jewels to the value of Rs. 5,000 and also a number of vahanas and two palanquins which are used at the time of festivals.

The temple has got 95 acres of both wet and dry lands and some coconut thopes. They have been leased out. Also there are some houses which have been rented out. The annual income of the temple is estimated at Rs. 27,000 which is utilised for the maintenance of the temple and for the conduct of the festivals.

A number of festivals are also conducted in the temple of which the Thiruvadhirai festival and Masi Magham festival are important. They attract quite a large number of local population.

Legend has it that when Siva flooded the world to decimate the human race, Vishnu was floating in an earthen vessel which stretched from Kodavasal to Kumbakonam. The other legend states that Garuda while carrying a pot full of Nectar dropped part of it here and part of it in Kumbakonam. The connection is still kept up in certain matters of ritual. It is believed that a bath in the sacred Mahamaham Tank at Kumbakonam has no effect unless the worshipper has first bathed at Kodavasal. Pious persons always obesrve this rule and thus the village is crowded by visitors at the time of the Kumbakonam festival. The neighbourhood abounds in coconuts and a small export trade in the nuts was formerly carried on directly with Bombay.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Board of Trustees for looking after the affairs of the temple. There is also an Executive Officer in charge of the day-to-day administration of the temple.

THIRUKKOLLAMPUDUR

Sri Vilvaranyeswaraswamy Temple

The beautiful and artistic temple is situated in the middle of Thirukkollampudur village facing east. The population of the village according to 1961 Census is 748. Koradacheri, about six kilometres from this place is the nearest railway station. Close to this temple is a river and a grove which add to the beauty of the temple.

Brahma Theertham is in front of this temple. Arjuna Theertham, Agasthya Theertham and Vettaru are the other important Theerthams here. This temple measures 459 feet east to west and 231 feet south to north. There is no gopuram over the main entrance, but there is one at the entrance of the second prakaram. There are two Vinayagar shrines on either side of the main entrance. Next to this, there comes Vasantha Mandapam. Around the second prakaram, there are flower gardens. The gopuram at the entrance to the second prakaram is 75 feet tall and has five tiers. It is believed that this temple was built during the period of Kulothunga Chola I.

The presiding deity is a Swayambu Lingam known as Sri Vilvaranyeswarar or Vilvavananathar. Soundaranayagi or Azhagu Nachiyar is the Goddess. From the inscriptions, it is found that the presiding deity and His divine consort are also known as Thirukkollampudur Udayar and Azhagiya Nachiyar respectively. Vilvavanam, Brahma Vanam, Panchakkarapuram and Kandeepavanam are the other names of this village.

There are separate shrines for Valampuri Vinayagar, Somaskandhar, Gajamuktheeswarar, Panchalingam, Murugar, Mahalakshmi, Bairavar and Navagrahas. The festival deity of Natarajar is in the Mahamandapam. Vilva Tree is the Sthala Viruksham.

Thirugnanasambandhar is said to have stayed here and sung several "Padhigams" in his "Thevaram". Among 274 famous places mentioned in Thevaram, this village is also one, situated on the southern bank of river Cauvery. It is believed that those who die in this place attain 'Mukthi'. It is said that Vinayagar, Ganga, Cauvery, Chandilyar, Adhi Seshan, Edaikkadar, Varaguna Pandyan, Silanthi Cholan, Brahma and Markandeya had all prayed the Lord of this place.

Six poojas are performed daily in this temple according to Kamika Agamam. The temple owns about 212·56 acres of wet and 166·86 acres of dry lands and seven houses. The annual income is about Rs. 42,460 from the above properties.

Theerthothsavam and Boat festival are the two important festivals celebrated. A number of other festivals like Skandha Sashti, Thiruvadhirai, Karthigai Deepam and Sivarathri etc., are also celebrated. Peacock, swan, bandicoot (Munjuroo), rishabam, horse and sooran are the vahanas in this temple, which are used during the festivals.

The temple's administration was previously managed by the Nagapattinam Devasthanam Committee. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department took over the administration of this temple in the year 1944. An Executive Officer and five Trustees appointed by this Department are managing this temple.

THIRUKKANNAMANGAI

Sri Bakthavathsala Perumal Temple

Quite an interesting place of worship to visit is the famous Vaishnavite shrine at Thirukkannamangai, eight

kilometres west of the reputed pilgrim centre of Thiruvarur. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 1,105. Thanjavur, the District Headquarters and Nannilam, the Taluk Headquarters are 64 and 19 kilometres away respectively,

The temple which covers an area of about ten acres has two road prakarams apart from two sancta and presents an impressive view. It is said that it was built during the period of the famous Chola rulers. Later on, renovations were made to the temple periodically. There are several interesting stone inscriptions here. The presiding deity of the temple. Sri Bakthavathsala Perumal is represented by a twelve feet high stone vigraham in a standing posture. There is a separate shrine for His divine consort known as Abishegavalli Thayar. The festival idols of the God and Goddess are made of Panchalogam. A noteworthy feature here is the idol of Viswaksenar which has only two arms, a rare feature, which normally cannot be found anywhere.

According to a legend associated with this temple, Lord Vishnu revealed Himself to Varuna and Sage Romesa who worshipped the Lord of this place. Thirumangai Alwar has composed several sacred hymns in praise of the Lord here. An interesting sight in this temple is a huge beehive inside the shrine of Goddess Abishegavalli Thayar, with the bees always swarming around it. This beehive has been in existence for ages past and according to the legend, it is believed that Maharishis (great sages) in the shape of these bees are offering poojas to the deity. Worship is offered every day to the bee-hive also and pilgrims seldom miss witnessing this rare function. There is a printed Sthala Puranam about this shrine in Sanskrit, edited by one Sri Srinivasaraghavan.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary priests according to the principles of the Vaikanasa Agamam. The ancient jewels of the temple in gold, silver and diamonds are worth about Rs. 25,000 of which the costly gem set "Nethi-chutti" of the Thayar deserves special mention. The temple owns extensive landed properties of both wet and dry lands apart from several buildings which fetch an annual

income of about Rs. 16,000, by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its day-to-day activities. The temple also gets a sizable annual income through its hundi collections and Archana charges. There is a big Ther (car), a gold plated palanquin, and a Garuda Vahanam apart from several other vahanas, all made of wood. The car festival and the Thiru Athyayana Uthsavam are the important festivals celebrated here which are attended by a large number of devotees from far and near.

An Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are in charge of the temple.

THIRUPPERUGAVALUR

(H/O. MANAKKAL)

Sri Abimuktheeswarar Temple

Thirupperugavalur is situated at a distance of ten kilometres west of Thiruvarur railway station. The place is accessible by bus also. Its population is 1,992.

Thirupperugavalur, a hamlet of Manakkal is one of the Saivite centres. It has an ancient temple dedicated to Sri Abimuktheeswarar. His divine consort is known as Sri Abinnambigai. There is a separate sanctum for Lord Subramaniar.

The exact age of the temple is not known, but it is said to have been constructed by Chola Kings. The temple has been constructed on a small mountain in the conventional type with one prakaram, two sancta and a gopuram of forty feet high. It is believed that this is the place where Darakasura was killed by Lord Subramaniar.

Two poojas are performed every day. The temple has got forty-three acres of both wet and dry lands, the income from which is utilised for the poojas and maintenance of the temple. There are two vahanas a peacock and a soora, made of wood and these are used during festivals.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed a Board of Trustees to look after the affairs of the temple.

ENGAN

Sri Subramanyaswamy Temple

The temple is situated centrally in Engan village about eight kilometres from Koradacheri railway station. The population of Engan according to 1961 Census is 1,782. The temple faces east. It has a three-tiered Rajagopuram. There are two entrances to this temple. One is on the east and the other on the south. Lord Brahmapureeswarar, the presiding deity is situated in the central mandapam facing east. On the western side of the sanctum sanctorum, SriArumuga-swamy with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai mounted on the peacock is found facing south. There is only one prakaram. The sannadhi of Sri Shanmuganathar is known as Shanmuga-nathar Deva Sabha. The workmanship of the idol of Sri Shanmuganathar is so intricate that small holes are found on all the ears of the idol to adorn the Lord with ear-rings. There is a separate shrine for the Goddess Brahmanayaki on the eastern side of the Deva Sabha. Lord Natarajar with Sivakami, Dakshinamurthy, Vinayagar, Balasubramaniar, Brahma, Durga Devi, Kasi Viswanathar, Navagrahas, Bairavar and Annamalaiyar are the other deities in this temple.

The temple covers an area of about four acres of land and has separate sancta for the God and Goddess. Appar has sung

in praise of the presiding deity. Saint Arunagirinathar has sung hymns on Lord Subramanyar Daily six poojas are performed.

Perumal Temple, Mariamman Temple and Kali Amman Temple are the other temples situated around this. Nethra Pushkarani, Kumara Theertham, Brahma Theertham, Saravana Poigai and Virudha Cauvery are the important Theerthams of this place.

The Brahmothsavam during Thai Poosam and the Skandha Shasti during Ayppasi are the two important festivals in this temple. Besides, Karthigai Deepam, Thiruvadhirai, Masi Magham, Adi Pooram, Vaikasi Visagham, Vinayagar Chathurthi and Navarathri are the other festivals celebrated here.

There are also idols of Somaskandhar, Ambal, Subramaniar, Vinayagar, the Nalvars, Chandrasekharar, Manonmani, Rudrapatheeswarar etc. They are made of Panchalogam. This temple owns about 38·19 acres of wet and 27·07 acres of dry lands and three tiled houses. The temple derives about Rs. 19,000 as annual income.

There are two interesting legends associated with this temple. One is that there was a Sculptor who was a staunch devotee of Lord Murugar. He made an artistic image of Singaravelar in Sikkal. With the intention that no such image should be made again, he cut his right thumb. After some time on the direction of the Lord in his dreams, he again designed another beautiful Arumuga idol in Ettukudi. There he gave up his eye sight with the same intention. Then he came to this place where a woman was assisting him. He again started doing a third Murugar idol mounted on a peacock with the help of the woman. When he was giving the finishing touch, his chisel inflicted a cut on the fingers of the woman who was assisting him and the blood gushing out of the wound slitted his eyes. At once he regained his eyesight and sung a hymn on Lord Muruga and exclaimed "எண் கண்".

Another legend is that as Brahma who is possessed with eight eyes prayed to the Lord of this place, it got the name *Engan* ('எண்' meaning eight and 'கண்' meaning eyes).

An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and three Trustees are managing the temple.

OTHER TEMPLES

About twenty four kilometres from Nannilam lies the village of Thirukkottaram where an ancient shrine of Siva dedicated to Ayravatheeswara exists. Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam. There are several interesting stone inscriptions on the walls of the temple which are very informative. Sri Gnanapureeswaraswamy Temple of Thirumeignanam, otherwise popularly known as Veezhimayanam is another sacred Siva sthalam where the Vaikasi Visakam festival is celebrated with great eclat in honour of Gnanapureeswarar. Thalaiyur about sixteen kilometres from Nannilam is noted for its ancient Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Valeeswaraswamy. It is said that it was here that the famous Saint *Rudhrapathi Nayanar* attained 'mukthi' by the grace of the Lord. The Nayanar had composed several sacred 'Padhigams' in praise of the Lord. The ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Parvatheeswarar at Injikudi about two kilometres from Peralam railway station is supposed to have been visited by Saint Arunagirinathar. Legend has it that the Lord of this shrine offered a grand darshan to the people belonging to Veduvar community.

Sri Meganathaswamy Temple of Tirumaichur which is at a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Nannilam is said to have been built during the Chola times. Both Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have visited this shrine. The presiding deity of the temple is in the form of a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort known as Goddess Lalithambigai is believed to be very powerful. Thiruppamburam, close to the Peralam

railway station which has the temple of Sri Seshapureeswarar is also a " Padal Petra Sthalam ". Adjacent to Thiruppampuram lies Serugudi, hamlet of Vilagam which is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Sukshamapureeswarar. Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and composed eleven sacred verses in praise of the Lord. There are several ancient stone inscriptions here which, if deciphered, will give valuable information about the temple. The old Siva temple dedicated to Sri Agnipureeswarar at Anniyur, sixteen kilometres from Aduthurai railway station is said to have been built by the Chola Kings. It has been visited by Appar. A large number of devotees from far and near visit this shrine for worship on the Thiruvadhirai day every year.

The village of Koilkandangudi is situated on the Peralam - Karaikal bus route. It is noted for its well known temple of Lord Muruga who is in a standing posture. This ancient temple covers an area of about one acre and presents an inspiring view. Saint Arunagirinathar had visited this shrine and offered worship. This shrine attracts a large number of devotees especially on the Kirthigai days. Koilthirumahalam is noted for its ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Mahakalanathar, a Swayambu Lingam. Legend has it that after destroying Ambasura, Goddess Badrakali did a severe penance and got rid of the "Brahmahatti dosha" by the grace of the Lord. The temple which covers an area of about six acres has as many as six beautiful pagodas with stucco figures on them and presents an impressive view. Both Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord. The temple owns extensive landed properties which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 26,756. This sum is utilised for its day-to-day activities and general maintenance.

Sarguneswarapuram, about sixteen kilometres from Aduthurai railway station has the ancient temple of Sarguneswaraswamy where the Skandha Sashti festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm every year. Saint Sundarar had visited this shrine and worshipped the Lord here. Pandaravadai, a hamlet of Koondhalur about fourteen kilometres from Poonthottam railway station is connected by bus The ancient Siva temple of

Jambukarunyaswamy here has an interesting legendary background. The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is believed to have been created by Sri Rama. Sri Roma Maharishi had also worshipped this Lord here. Both Appar and Arunagirinathar had visited this shrine and composed many sacred hymns in praise of the Lord.

Situated at a distance of about eight kilometres from Nannilam, the old Siva temple of Achuthamangalam dedicated to Sri Somanathaswamy presents an inspiring view. The temple is said to have been built by the famous Chola Kings. There are several interesting stone inscriptions on the walls of the temple. The Skandha Sashti festival is celebrated with great eclat when a large number of devotees from far and near congregate here. Talaiyalamgudi, a hamlet of Simili about fourteen kilometres from Thiruvarur is famous for its ancient Siva temple of Narthanapureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. Legend has it that the famous Kabila Maharishi worshipped the Lord here and miraculously got cured of his chronic ailment and attained eternal bliss by the grace of the Lord. Saint Appar has sung in praise of the presiding deity. Karaiveeram, a hamlet of Thirukkannamangai at a distance of about twenty kilometres from Nannilam has an ancient Siva shrine dedicated to Sri Brahmapureeswarar which has been sung by Sambandhar. Sri Abivirutheeswaraswamy Temple of Abivirutheeswaram is said to have been built during the period of the Chola rulers. It is situated on the Kumbakonam-Koradacheri bus route at a distance of about three kilometres from the Koradacheri railway station. Saints Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have visited this shrine and composed several sacred "Padhigams" in praise of Sri Abivirutheeswarar. It is stated that a staunch Vaisya devotee who had no issue for a long time was blessed with children when he worshipped the Lord here. Very close to Abivirutheeswaram lies another sacred Sivasthalam Vidayapuram which is noted for its famous Meenakshisundareswara Temple. It is said that the temple was built by Raja Raja, the great. The Goddess Meenakshi is said to be very powerful here and Her beautiful idol, full of grace is of good workmanship. The Navarathri festival in the temple attracts a large number of devotees from far and near.

PAPANASAM TALUK

THIRUKKARUGAVUR

Sri Mullaivananathar and Varadaraja Perumal Temple

Thirukkarugavur is situated at a distance of five kilometres south of Papanasam. The nearest railway station is Papanasam and it is connected by bus also with the neighbouring towns. The population of the village is 1,508.

This is one of the sacred Saivite centres sung in the Thevaram. This holy place having been empowered in a grove of Mullai plants got the name Mullaivanam. The temple is an ancient one. The presiding deity is Sri Mullaivananatha-swamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The name of the deity is derived from the fact that Mullai is the favourite flower of this deity. The Sthala Viruksham is Mullai creeper.

The temple is fairly big in size occupying an area of more than an acre. The imposing Gopuram at the entrance and the tank in front of it with swaying coconut palms all round present an inviting appearance. The Gopuram and the huge compound walls seem to tell the story of more than a thousand years.

Saints Appar and Sambandhar have celebrated the glory of this temple in soul stirring verses of rare beauty and charm.

There are several inscriptions on the compound walls and the walls of Arthamandapam and Mahamandapam relating to the period of Parantaka I (907—947). They refer to the

endowments made for the maintenance of the temple. There is also a reference to the Pidari and Mahavishnu Temples at this place, which would show that these are ancient institutions.

The sculpture and the artistic work on the main vimanam, Koshtas and Natarajar Mandapa are impressive. The holy waters of this place are four in number—Brahma Theertham, Ksheera Kundam, Sathia Koopam and Virutha Cauvery.

Four poojas are performed every day following Kamika Aagama Sastra.

There are jewels worth Rs. 16,000. The temple owns properties comprising 64·64 acres of wet lands, 23 acres of dry lands and some house sites. The income from these properties is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple. Lectures are said to be arranged there for the propagation of Saivasiddhantha. Arrangements are made every year for the Thirumurai Parayanam by erudite scholars.

The Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi month, Navarathri Uthsavam in Purattasi, Skandha Sashti, Tirukarthigai and Thiruvadhirai are the most important festivals of the temple, which are said to attract quite a large number of the local population.

The fame of this temple is due to the benign Goddess Sri Garbharakshambiga (an aspect of Sri Parvathi) who offers protection to the human embryo. This is the remarkable feature which distinguishes this temple from the innumerable other shrines of our land. It is believed that the Goddess Sri Garbharakshambiga vouchsafes safety to women during pregnancy and child birth. The temple draws its devotees from all sects including Vaishnavites.

The Sthala Puranam written by Sri T. S. Gopalan of Thirukkarugavur gives a detailed account of the origin of this place and the various persons who were blessed at this place. To mention one such story, Sage Nidhruva was living here with his wife Vedhika. One day when Sage Nidhruva was away,

Sage Urdhvapada happened to visit the place. Vedhika who was then alone and in an advanced state of pregnancy unwittingly failed to offer due hospitality to the guest. Urdhvapada, unaware of her difficulties, felt insulted at her conduct and cursed her as a result of which poor Vedhika was visited with a foul disease which began to eat into the very vitals of not only herself but also the child in the womb. The helpless Vedhika fervently prayed for relief to Goddess Parvathi, the embodiment of mercy. The Goddess appeared before Vedhika in the form of Sri Garbharakshambiga, totally annulled the effect of the curse and saved her. The story goes to say that the Goddess offered protection to the embryo by keeping it in a divine pot till it bloomed into a fullfledged child. Vedhika, overwhelmed with joy, fell at the feet of Sri Garbharakshambiga and prayed that the Ambiga should take a permanent abode at the place and continue to offer protection to future generations of women. It is this prayer that is being fulfilled even to this day at this sacred place.

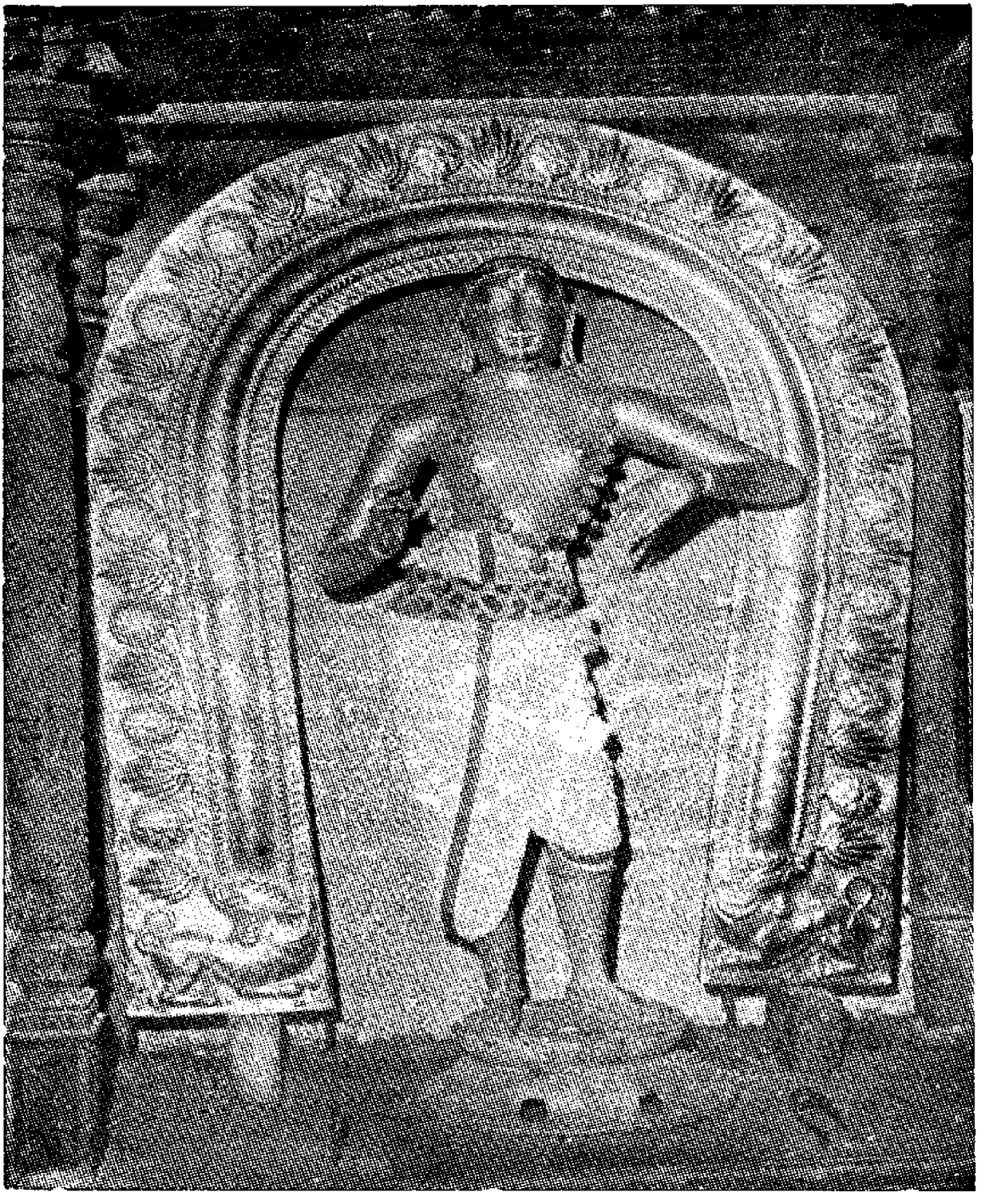
In the village there is an old Vaishnavite shrine dedicated to Sri Varadaraja Perumal. One can worship here Lord Vishnu with Sri Devi and Bhudevi, Sri Anjaneyar, Sri Vishvaksenar and Udayavar.

Both the temples are under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed Trustees to look after the affairs of the temples.

ALANGUDI

Sri Abathsagayeswaraswamy Temple

Alangudi with a population of 1,390 is about six kilometres from Needamangalam railway station. Sri Abathsagayeswaraswamy Temple is situated centrally in Alangudi village with a 65 feet tall Rajagopuram and massive walls surrounding it. It faces south. The Rajagopuram contains interesting



Saint Sundarar
Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy Temple
Alangudi.

sculptures. Another small gopuram, 15 feet tall is also on the eastern side.

At the entrance of the gopuram, there is a shrine of Vinayagar who according to legend, saved the Devas from the clutches of the demon Gajamukhan. On proceeding further, there is the first prakaram. Here separate shrines for the Divine consort, the Sun and Sundaramurthy Swamigal exist. In the inner prakaram, there are idols of Nalvar, Suryesar, Somesar, Guru Moksheswarar, Somanathar, Saptharishinathar, Vishnunathar, Kasi Viswanathar, Visalakshi and Agasthyar. There is a separate sanctum for the special deity of the shrine, viz., Guru Dakshinamurthy. There are about fifteen theerthams in this temple. It is believed that the special feature of this village is that so far none had died of snake bite. Since the marriage of the Goddess is believed to have taken place here, it is called "*Thirumanamangalam.*"

Several inscriptions relating to the Chola period are found here. One of them gives an interesting account of a local famine due to which the ryots borrowed from the temple and made over fifty acres of land to it towards interest. Another refers to a settlement of the revenue of the village.

Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple.

Following is the hymn sung by Thirugnanasambandhar :

"சீரார் கழலே தொழுவீ ரிதுசெப்பீர்
வாரார் முலைமங் கையோடும் முடனாகி
ஏரார் இரும்பூ ளையிடங் கொண்டீசன்
காரார் கடல்நஞ் சமுதுண் டகருத்தே"

There is a legend that when Devas approached Lord Siva to save them from the '*Alakala*' poison that emanated after the Thiruparkadal (Ocean of Milk) was churned, Siva swallowed the poison and retained it in His throat itself. Hence this village is named Alangudi (poison-drunk). The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is named Abathsagayar or Aranyeswarar and the Goddess Elavar Kuzhali or Sri Umai Ammai.

There is another interesting legend concerning Saint Sundarar. In the course of his pilgrimage when the saint was nearing this shrine, the river Vettaru which was in spate prevented him from proceeding further. It is believed that the Lord of this temple came as a boatman and offered to transport the saint and his followers, receiving gold as consideration thereof. In the midstream, the boatman could not take the boat off a current and it dashed against a rock. As the saint lifted up his hands in prayer, the boatman disappeared and in his place stood Lord Siva who blessed the saint.

The temple owns about 112·27 acres of wet lands, 48·45 acres of dry lands and a tiled house. The plinth area of this temple is about 1·28 acres. There are four poojas daily. Chithirai festival is an important one. Navarathri, Thai Poosam, Skandha Sashti, Panguni Uthiram, Karthigai Deepam, Adi Pooram and Thiruvadhirai are the other festivals. An Executive Officer and three Trustees are managing the temple.

AVOOR

Sri Pasupatheeswaraswamy Temple

Avoor about twelve kilometres south-east of Papanasam is a place glorified in the hymns of Thirugnanasambandhar, thanks to the famous temple of Sri Pasupatheeswarar situated here. According to the 1961 Census, Avoor Panchayat has a pupulation of 2,815.

The shrine is said to have been constructed during the Chola period. It may be mentioned that Avoor was the name of a Kurram or union of villages in Chola time. According to a legend, Indra and the seven Rishis had worshipped Lord Siva here.

The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam faces east. The temple has a seventy feet tall five-tiered gopuram. The area occupied by the temple is a little more than an acre. There are some shrine inscriptions.

Poojas are performed four times daily. During the Kalasanthi in the morning, *'Go pooja'* (cow worship) is also done. The temple owns about 144·11 acres of land.There is a big 'Ther' (temple car) which is used during festival times. The Sthala Puranam relating to the shrine unfolds quite a few interesting legends. The Temple Officials say that the Muslim residents in the vicinity of the temple believe that in former times if the doors of the sanctum of Goddess Mangalambigai in the temple were left open in the nights, the houses opposite to the shrine would catch fire.

An Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members look after the affairs of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

KING : Rajendra III (1246-1279 A. D.)

VILLAGE : The village is called Avur, in Avur Kurram which was a sub-division of Nitta-vinoda-vala-nadu.

DEITY: The main deity is called Pasupatheesvaramudaiyar.

STRUCTURES : The main shrine carries an inscription of Rajendra III (1246-1279 A.D.) enumerating the lands owned by the temple upto third year of the King. In all likelihood, the main shrine would have been erected during that period.

NALLUR

Sri Kalyanasundareswarar and Sri Adhi Kesava Perumal Temple

About five kilometres from Papanasam on the Saliyamangalam-Kudavasal road is Nallur, a place of religious and eipgraphical importance. The population of Nallur is 1906. The Saivite temple of Sri Kalyanasundareswarar and Vaishnavite temple of Sri Adhi Kesava Perumal are situated here. A centre of Saivite worship, the place has been celebrated by Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar in their Thevarams.

Sri Kalyanasundareswarar Temple

The temple with its tank is centrally situated in this village. Writing about Nallur, the Tanjore District Handbook states, "It has a temple dedicated to Kalyanasundareswarar, the Lingam of which appears to have been made of shining metal and not of stone as is generally the case. Amongst the inscriptions discovered here may be mentioned the one belonging to the time of Vira Ramanatha which shows that the Hoysalas held sway over the Cholamandalam from 1251 to 1271. Another relates to a Mutt whose head was a "Tattamudaiyar Isanadeva". Isanadeva was a teacher of Mudaliars or chief of the Maligai Mutt at Thiruvadamarudur who had evidently settled at Nallur."

The temple is said to have been constructed during the Chola period. In the year 1945, this ancient temple was renovated by the head of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam. A Kumbabishegam was also performed after renovation.

The area occupied by the temple is about four acres. It has a tall gopuram which adds to its charm. The temple pillars are elegantly carved. With three prakarams all round, the sanctum sanctorum is on a high level. Apart from the Lingam, the Garba Graham has the impressive images of Sri Kalyanasundareswarar and His consort.

Poojas are performed five times a day by a hereditary priest. Among the festivals celebrated in the temple, Masi Magham is the most important. A bath in the temple tank on Masi Magham day is considered very sacred and efficacious. About 2,000 people are said to gather in the village for Masi Magham. The temple is administered by the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam.

There is a legend to the effect that Siva and Parvathi gave darshan as a newly-wed couple (*Kalyanakolam*) to sage Agasthya here. Another story is told about a Brahmin who was born as a dog due to some curse. It is said that the dog after taking bath in the sacred waters here attained salvation.

It is generally believed that childless women are blessed with children after worshipping Goddess Kali here. Many votive offerings are therefore made to this deity.

Sri Adhi Kesava Perumal Temple

This temple dedicated to Perumal with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi is also an old temple. Information is not available regarding the date of its construction. It was renovated in 1947 by local devotees.

The Nallur Sthala Puranam contains a legend about Lord Mahavishnu taking the form of Narasimha as desired by the Lord of this place. According to the well-known legend, Narasimha killed King Hiranya and blessed His young devotee Prahlada. The ten-day Narasimha Jayanthi Brahmothsavam, celebrated in the temple annually to commemorate this divine episode is very popular even to this day.

Poojas are performed twice daily. The mangement of the shrine vests in a Board of Trustees consisting of three members. There are a number of inscriptions in the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following kings are represented in the temple.

Uthama Chola (970-985 A. D.)
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A. D.)
Rajendra I (1012-1044 A. D.)
Rajadhi Raja II (1163-1178 A. D.)
Kulothunga (1178-1218 A. D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A. D.)
Rajendra III (1246-1279 A. D.)
Hoysala Viraramanatha (13th century)

VILLAGE : The village is referred to as Thiru Nallur alias Panchavanmadevichaturvedi Mangalam in Nallur Nadu, a sub-division of Nitta-vinoda-vala-nadu.

THE DEITY : The main deity is called Thirunallur Nayanar.

STRUCTURES : The central shrine carries inscriptions of Uthama Chola and Raja Raja I in fragments. Evidently it has undergone repairs after Eleventh Century A.D. The second prakaram of the temple carries inscriptions of Kulothunga III, Raja Raja III, Rajendra III and Hoysala III. It should be assigned to Twelfth Century A.D. In the fifth year of Raja Raja III, the Agambadiyar of the temple (servants) built a shrine to Ganesa called Agambadi Vinayaga Pillaiyar and gifted lands for it. The second gopuram carries an inscription of Rajendra III. Evidently it is to be dated to 12-13th Century A.D. A fragmentary inscription of Raja Raja I refers to the building of a mandapam in the temple by a certain Narayanan Egaviran.

GIFTS ETC : Uthama Chola instituted an enquiry into the affairs of the temple through his officer, Manakkurai Viranarayana. In the twenty-third year of Raja Raja I, a lamp was gifted to the temple of Ilankoyil Mahadeva. In the twenty-fifth year of Raja Raja III, a lady disciple gifted a Mutt to a teacher Tattamudaiyar Isanadeva.

THYAGASAMUDRAM

Sri Valvil Ramaswamy Temple

Thyagasamudram, a small village with great puranic tradition and historic importance is about eleven kilometres from Swamimalai which is the nearest railway station. The village has a population of 2,103 according to the 1961 Census.

The ancient Sri Valvil Ramaswamy Temple is one of the sacred shrines of Vaishnavite origin. The deity is considered powerful. The temple came up here due to the efforts of a Chola ruler.

There are two prakarams and two gopurams in this temple. The front gopuram is about 59 feet tall and the inner gopuram is about 35 feet high. Garba Graham has a Sobana Vimanam which has some plaster figures. The plinth area of the temple is about 1·10 acres. On several occasions, renovations were carried out by successive heads of the Ahobila Mutt.

The image of the presiding deity is in sleeping posture and is 10 feet long. The festival deity in standing posture is about 3 feet high. Five poojas are performed daily. The temple owns about 24·28 acres of wet lands and 42·08 acres of dry lands. The head of the Ahobila Mutt is the hereditary Trustee who is managing the temple. Besides the Brahmothsavam in Panguni, there are other festivals like Vaikasi Visagam, Sri Jayanthi in Avani, Navarathri in Purattasi and Karthigai Deepam.

The great Vaishnavite saint Thirumangai Alwar had sung ten pasurams eulogising the shrine. There is a story that when Thirumangai Alwar visited this temple he found the Lord in sleeping posture in the Garba Graham. Lest he should disturb the Lord's sleep, the saint returned towards the Dwajasthambam. The story goes that the saint's eyes were blurred and so he turned and walked back to the sanctum sanctorum where he had the darshan of Sri Rama.

There is a legend to the effect that when Ravana, the demon King of Lanka was carrying away Sita, Jatayu, the Vulture King prevented him from doing so and also fought with him. Ravana cut one of the wings of Jatayu who fell down immediately. When Rama with his brother Lakshmana came in search of Sita, he found Jatayu almost half dead. Jatayu gave all information about Sita to Rama and died. Rama performed the last rites for Jatayu whom he regarded as his father. Since Rama sojourned here, the place is held sacred.

There is a belief that one who visits this temple will be happy in his present life and attain Moksha.

MELAKAPISTHALAM

Sri Gajendra Varadaraja Perumal Temple

Kapisthalam stands on the northern bank of the Cauvery about three kilometres from Papanasam railway station. The

name of the place is said to be derived from the monkey (Kapi) Kings Vali and Sugriva who worshipped at the Vishnu temple here. Melakapisthalam Panchayat has a population of 1,386.

The ancient temple is one of the 108 temples celebrated by the Alwars in their songs. Thirumazhisai Alwar had sung a hymn in praise of this temple. The presiding deity is called Gajendra Varadaraja Perumal.

The architecture of this temple belongs to the Chola period. There are some interesting sculptures here. A Kumbabishegam was performed in the temple in 1958. The plinth area of this temple is about 34 cents. The presiding deity is in sleeping (*sayanam*) posture. The festival deities made of copper are typical icons of the Chola period. There is only one prakaram in this shrine.

There are some antique jewels here. The temple owns about 14·60 acres of wet and dry lands. It is managed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department through a Trustee.

As for festivals, Gajendra Moksham in Panguni month is the important one. The others are: Akshaya Thiruthiyai, Navarathri, Vaikunta Ekadasi, Rama Navami and Panguni Uthiram.

There is a legend that Perumal had blessed an elephant (Gajendran) here. It is also believed that Sage Parasarar had salvation in this sacred place. There are sannadhis for Andal and Santhanakrishnan.

PERUMALKOIL

Sri Jagathrakshaka Perumal Temple

Sri Jagathrakshaka Perumal Temple built about 500 years ago in Rani Mangammal's reign is a historic shrine. Perumal

Koil has a population of 1,119. Ayyampettai, about six kilometres from here is the nearest railway station. It is said that once this shrine was situated in Gudaloor near Puthur on the bank of the river Coleroon. The temple was washed away due to floods. Consequently the idols in the temple were removed and installed in a place at Perumalkoil village.

Rani Mangammal built the present temple. Gudaloor which was once hailed as one of the 108 important Vaishnavite centres is now a small village. Tirumangai Alwar had sung ten pasurams in praise of this temple and village.

The image of the presiding deity, Sri Jagathrakshaka Perumal is five feet in height. The festival idol is about three feet in height. There is a separate shrine for Pushpavalli Thayar. There are other idols of Varadaraja Perumal, Choodi Kodutha Nachiyar, Thirumangai Alwar, Manavala Mamunivar etc., in this temple.

The front Rajagopuram has five storeys. There is a mandapam in front of the sanctum of Perumal. The pillars of the Perumal sanctum contain images of the Ministers of Rani Mangammal. The pasurams of Thirumangai Alwar are written in the front mandapam. The annual Brahmothsavam, an important festival, is celebrated for ten days in the month of Vaikasi. There are a few monthly festivals as well.

There are four poojas daily. The temple owns some silver and gold articles. It is having about 18·75 acres of wet and 10·55 acres of dry lands. An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of this temple.

PAPANASAM

Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

Papanasam, the Taluk Headquarters with a population of 9,705 is known for its Perumal temple which is about one kilometre from the Papanasam railway station.

The temple was built out of stones of an older temple which itself had been reconstructed in 1448. The entire village was endowed to the temple during the reign of Mallikarjuna, a Vijayanagar King. The Nayak Kings of Tanjore and their famous Minister Govinda Dikshitar had also made endowments to it.

This temple, according to the information furnished by the authorities, was built about 1,000 years ago. It is understood that the present architecture belongs to the Nayak period, probably that of Achuthappa Nayak. The presiding deity is called Srinivasa Perumal or Papavimochana Perumal while the Goddess is Pankajavalli Thayar.

There is a Mahamandapam for conducting the festivals. There are Arthamandapams and two prakarams. The plinth area of this temple is about 1·33 acres. The inner gopuram is fifteen feet tall.

There is a detailed Sthala Puranam in Sanskrit. Nammalwar has sung hymns in praise of the God. Four poojas are performed daily. The temple owns about 30·34 acres of wet and 13·33 acres of dry lands. Annual Brahmothasavam is celebrated in the month of Vaikasi. There are also other festivals like Adi Pooram, Navarathri, Sri Rama Navami, Sri Jayanthi and Karthigai Deepam.

There is a belief that women who worship Sri Pankajavalli Thayar (Sri Devi) will always lead a happy and prosperous life. Even today a number of marriages are being conducted in the Thayar Sannadhi.

An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and a Trustee are in charge of the administration of the temple.

VANGARAMPETTAI

H/O PAPANASAM

Sri Ramalingaswamy Temple

Sri Ramalingaswamy Temple, otherwise known as 108 Sivalayam is situated on the southern bank of the Kudamurutti river in Vangarampettai village about one kilometre towards the north-west of Papanasam railway station. The presiding deity is called Sri Ramalingeswarar and the Goddess Parvathavarthini (Malaivalar Kathali).

The plinth area of this temple is about 63 cents. There is one prakaram inside the temple. At the northern side of the main entrance of the temple, the sanctum of the divine consort is situated with a separate small prakaram. Next to this is the entrance to the presiding deity's sanctum. On the southern side of it there is a shrine for Vinayagar and on the northern side there is a shrine for Lord Murugar and His consorts Valli and Deivayanai.

In front of the Murugar's shrine there is a lengthy mandapam and in that 106 Sivalingams are installed in five rows. Including the presiding deity and the Hanumar Lingam, there are 108 Lingams. The presiding deity is a large Lingam. It is slightly inclined towards south. The existence of 108 Lingams is the characteristic feature of this temple. Daily poojas are offered to all the Lingams.

On the northern side of the temple there is a tank. It is believed that if one has a holy dip in the tank, one would be absolved of all sins and diseases. This place is famous for Murthi, Sthalam and Theertham.

We find a number of inscriptions here. From one of them it is understood that Raja Raja I had donated a huge sum, the interest out of which was intended for celebrating the Natarajar festival in the month of Ayppasi on his birth day. There are artistic idols of the Sun and Dakshinamurthy. The Hanumar Lingam supposed to have been brought by Hanumar apart from being graceful is big in size. The Arthamandapam of the presiding deity is full of artistic work.

The temple has undergone renovation from time to time. In the recent past, a Kumbabishegam was performed in June 1942.

Festivals like Vaikasi Visagam, Adi Pooram, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri, Annabishegam in Ayppasi and Karthigai Deepam are celebrated in the temple. There are four poojas daily. The temple owns about 28·44 acres of wet and 30·15 acres of dry lands, apart from a grove and few sites. It has an annual income of about Rs. 7,000.

Legend has it that Sri Rama had installed 108 Sivalingams to expiate the sin he committed in killing Kharan and Dhushanan, the two demons. Hence this place was called Papanasam 'Papam' meaning 'sin'. Another name for this village is Keezhai Rameswaram. Inscriptions refer to this village as Thirumalpuram.

An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and three Trustees are managing this temple.

TIRUPPALAITHURAI

H/O. PAPANASAM

Sri Palaivananathaswamy Temple

Within the limits of Papanasam town is situated Tiruppalaithurai which is noted for its Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Palaivananathar. The temple occupies an area of three acres. The gopuram is fifty feet high and has five tiers. There are two prakarams. The vimanam has artistic sculpture on it.

The old temple which is said to have been constructed during the regime of the Chola monarchs has inscriptions relating to Chola and Vijayanagar times. Saint Appar has sung in praise of this shrine. The hymns of the saint concer-

ning this shrine are noted for their absorbing composition. Few years ago this hoary shrine was renovated. The spacious mandapams bespeak the generosity and piety of their builders.

The Moolavar is Palaivananathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The divine consort is called Thavalambal. The sixty-eight Nayanmars, Vinayagar, Arumugar and Lakshmi are the other important deities in the temple. The festival images of Nataraja, Somaskandhar and other Gods are beautiful to look at though very old. There is a big granary which is a wonderful construction in brick. It is, however, in a state of disrepair now.

During a period of distress, a Chola King seems to have endowed this temple with the village of Chidambaranallur. The present income of the temple is Rs. 5,000 per annum according to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

PUTHUR

H/O AMMAPETTAI

Sri Putridankondeswarar Temple

This is situated at a distance of one kilometre north-east of Ammapettai railway station on the Thanjavur—Nagore railway line and is also well connected by bus. Puthur is the hamlet of Ammapettai City Panchayat whose population is 9,258.

The exact age of the temple is not known but the construction appears to be of the conventional Chola type. It has got only one prakaram and a gopuram with three storeys at the front entrance. It is said that some renovations were carried out recently and the gopuram was constructed by one of the Trustees.

The presiding deity is Putridankondeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. The divine consort is known as Soundaranayagi

Amman. Bala Muruga is worshipped with great veneration in the temple. The idols of Vinayagar, Chandikeswara and Saturn have also been installed. There are also several festival deities like Natarajar, Somaskandhar etc.

Saint Appar has hailed the Lord of this place as one who can cure a devotee of any disease he suffers from. Hence it is believed that people suffering from chronic diseases are relieved of their distress if they worship the Lord of this place.

Poojas are performed four times a day by a Brahmin Gurukkal following Kamiga Agama Sastras.

The temple has got about 95·76 acres of both wet and dry lands which have been leased out besides two houses. The annual income from the properties is estimated at Rs. 9,000 which is utilised not only for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple but also for religious propagation. Religious lectures are organised in the temple periodically.

There are several vahanas made of wood. They are elephant, horse, rishabam, yali, swan and peacock.

A number of festivals are conducted in the temple of which the Skandha Sashti, Karthigai and Panguni Uthiram are important.

According to the Sthala Puranam written by Sri R. Panchanadham Pillai, a Tamil scholar of Thiruchirapalli, the place is one of the sacred Saivite centres visited by Saint Appar. It has been glorified in his Thevaram. It is said that the name of the place was 'Puthur' since the Lingam of this temple was accidentally found under an ant-hill. The deity is also known as Putridankondeswarar. The name turned into Puthur in course of time. It may be mentioned that the deity of the Siva temple in Thiruvarur is also known as Putridankondeswarar.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department

which has appointed an Executive Officer to look after the day to-day administration of the temple. There is also a Board of Trustee.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

About twelve kilometres north of Papanasam is Tiruvaigavur known as Vilva Vana Kshetram. Thirugnanasambandhar had sung about this, as the place where Siva was worshipped by Lakshmi. Sri Vilvanathaswamy is the presiding deity of the temple. There are several inscriptions here which are very informative. Sri Ranganatha Perumal Temple in Adhanur, ten kilometres from the Taluk Headquarters has been sung by Thirumangai Alwar and is one of the 108 sacred Vaishnavite centres. Thirumandangudi which is about twelve kilometres from Papanasam is said to be hallowed by the birth of Thondaradipodi Alwar, the great Vaishnavite saint. The temple of Sri Ranganathaswamy here has been glorified by the Alwar in his Pasuram. On the north bank of the Cauvery about four kilometres from Ayyampettai lies Ganapathi Agraharam noted for its Ganapathi Temple maintained by the residents of the village.

The Brahmapureeswarar Temple in Pasupathikovil on the Madras-Tiruchirapalli railway line is said to have been built during Chola times. Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine. Goddess Durgai installed here is believed to be very powerful. Soolamangalam close to Pasupathikovil which has the temple of Kirthivaneswarar is also a Padal Petra Sthalam.

The old temple of Sri Kumaraswamy at Kavalur, six kilometres from Ayyampettai is said to have been built by the Chola kings. It has been visited by Saint Arunagirinathar. A number of devotees come to this shrine for worship on every Kirthigai day.

Govindakudi on the Papanasam-Kudavasal bus route has the famous Siva temple of Sri Gomuktheeswarar. Legend has it that the divine cow Kamadhenu had installed the Lingam here and offered worship. About five kilometres south of

Ayyampettai railway station is Melathur. In its chief Siva temple dedicated to Unnathapureeswarar, there are a few inscriptions belonging to the Chola period. At Irumbuthalai is the temple of Thriloganatheswara which is said to have received supplies of paddy during the time of Raja Raja I and Vikrama Chola.

Valangaiman, about sixteen kilometres from Papanasam has the temple of Sri Arunachaleswara where the Skandha Sashti festival is celebrated with enthusiasm for six days every year. The old Siva temple dedicated to Swarnapureeswarar at Andankovil about twenty kilometres from Papanasam has been visited by Saint Appar. The temple which has been renovated once by a devotee has artistic pillars. It is claimed that in the month of Chithirai, the Sun's rays fall on the Lord's idol for three days.

Haridwaramangalam about ten kilometres from Ammapettai is not served by bus. One has to travel by bullock cart to reach the village. The Siva temple of Padaleeoswaraswamy here has an interesting legendary background. Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this place. The presiding deity is a Swayambu Lingam. The divine consort, Sri Alangara Valli Amman is considered powerful.

A Kumbabishegam was performed in 1960 in the ancient Siva temple of Sri Sakshinathaswamy in Avalivanallur, about seven kilometres from Ammapettai. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandar had sung in praise of the temple. The temple has a rich legendary background. A special feature in the temple is that behind the Swayambu Lingam in the sanctum sanctorum could be seen the images of Sri Sakshinathar and His consort on their rishabam mount. The shrine gets considerable income from its lands, houses and coconut groves. Thai Amavasai is the important festival celebrated in the temple.

Deepambalpuram, about four kilometres from Ammapettai railway station is noted for its Siva temple dedicated to Sri Vanmikanathaswamy. According to the temple authorities, it was built by a Maratha King who ruled over Tanjore It is

said that once a cow was regularly emptying her udder over an ant-hill here which was then a forest. On removing the ant-hill, a Lingam was found. The ruler of the place later built a temple here. The Rajagopuram of the temple built according to the Chola architecture has interesting sculptural work.

Sri Pushpavaneswaraswamy Temple at Poondi is a hoary shrine. The presiding deity is a Swayambu Lingam. A Kumbabishegam was performed in 1967. The temple has 183·81 acres of lands and considerable gold and silver jewellery. The temple is managed by a Hereditary Trustee. There is a Saivite temple dedicated to Sri Chakkaravageeswarar at Sakkarapalli.

Udayarkovil near Salyamangalam has the Siva temple of Karavandeeswarar said to have been constructed in the Tenth Century by the Chola King Raja Raja. It has a fifty-one feet tall five-tiered gopuram. The temple has an interesting legendary background. The Goddess is called Dharmavalli here. The temple which occupies an area of 91 cents faces east. Apart from the God's and Goddess's sannadhis, there are shrines for other deities like Vinayagar, Murugar, Gajalakshmi etc., in the temple. Vaikasi Visakam is the most important festival of the temple.

THANJAVUR TALUK

THANJAVUR

Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple

Situated in the south-west corner of Thanjavur Town, the Brihadeeswarar Temple occupies an area measuring about 800 ft. by 400 ft. in a small Fort encircled by a moat.

The Brihadeeswarar Temple at Tanjore was constructed by Raja Raja I (985-1013 A.D.). It is a piece of engineering marvel considering the stage of development of knowledge in those days. The vimanam is said to be the tallest structure of that age. The vimanam is 216' sq. feet high and is constructed of stones with bonding and notching. They have not used mortar of any kind to bind the stones. They have also understood the strength of hollow structures. The outer wall which is 13' in width at the base has a hollow space between it and the inner wall enclosing the sanctum. Again the vimanam at the top is a hollow structure. The topmost covering slab is estimated to weigh about 80 tons. It baffles one's mind as to how in those days of poor contrivances people were able to get the stone over a height of 216'. The story goes that there was a ramp to the length of four miles starting from a village now called Sarapallam and the stones especially the top covering stone seems to have been transported over this ramp. What motive power was used is not anywhere described, probably the common motive power in the olden days, i.e., the elephant power was used. Another noteworthy feature in this temple is the monolithic bull whose dimensions are 19·5'×8·25'×12', estimated to weigh about 40 tons.

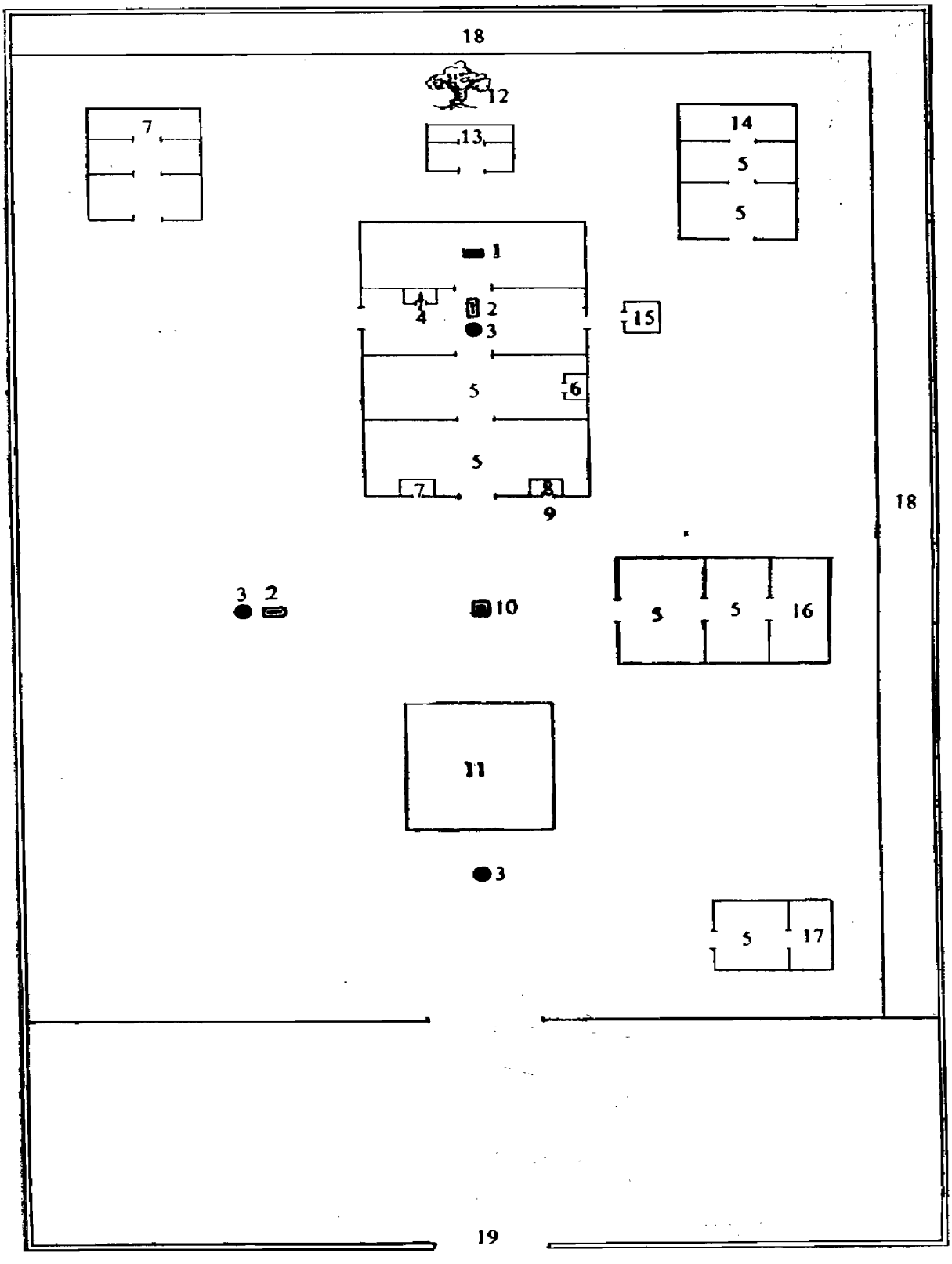
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

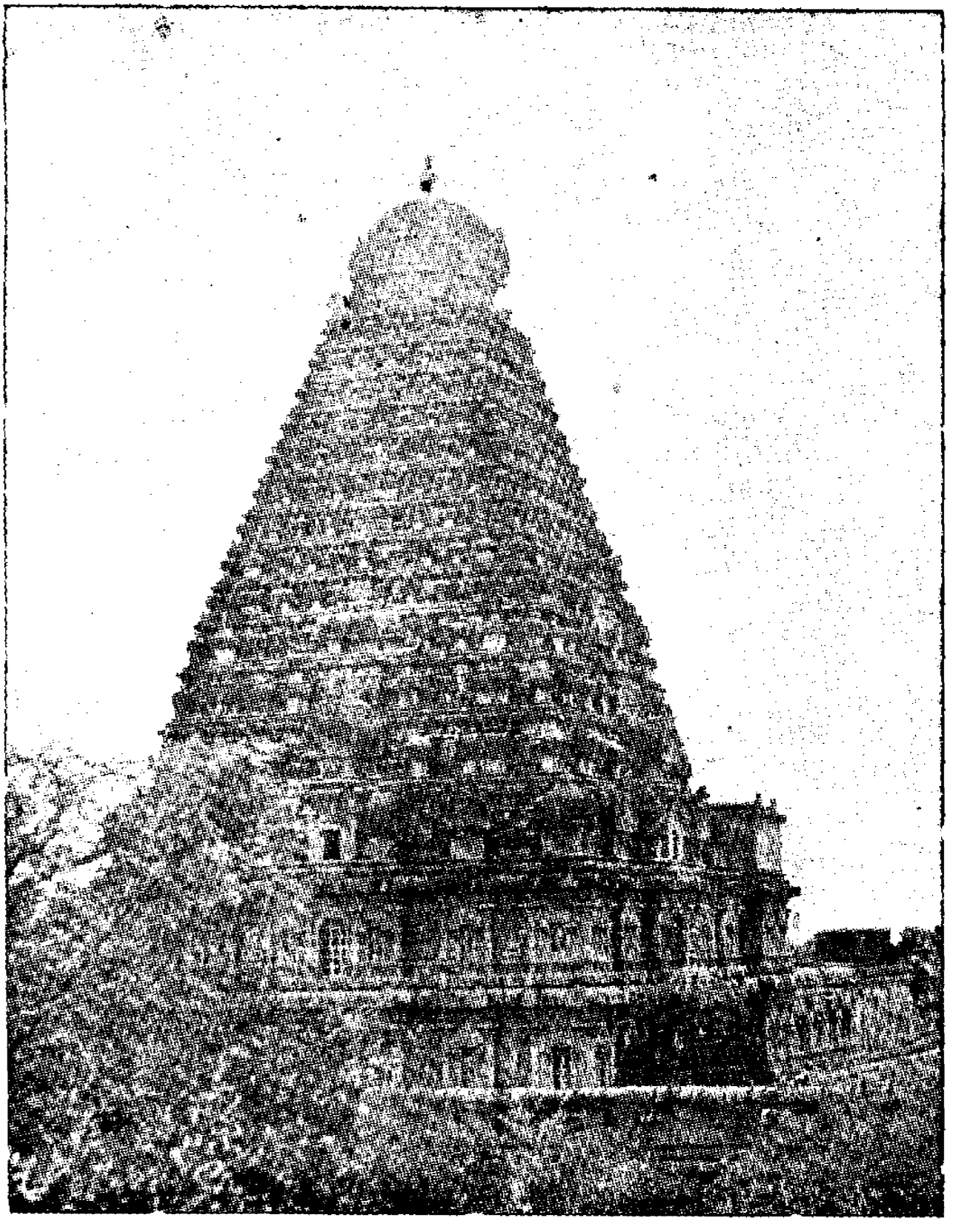
1. Brihadeeswarar (Moolavar)
2. Nandhi
3. Balipeedam
4. Rettai Vinayagar
5. Mandapam
6. Brihadeeswarar (Uthsavar)
7. Vinayagar
8. Durgai
9. Saneeswarar
10. Dwajasthambam
11. The Big Nandhi with the Mandapam
12. Sthalaviruksham
13. Karur Thevar
14. Shanmugar with Valli & Deivayanai
15. Chandikeswarar
16. Brahannayaki
17. Natarajar (Uthsavar)
18. 1008 Sivalingas
19. Front Tower

SRI BRIHADEESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

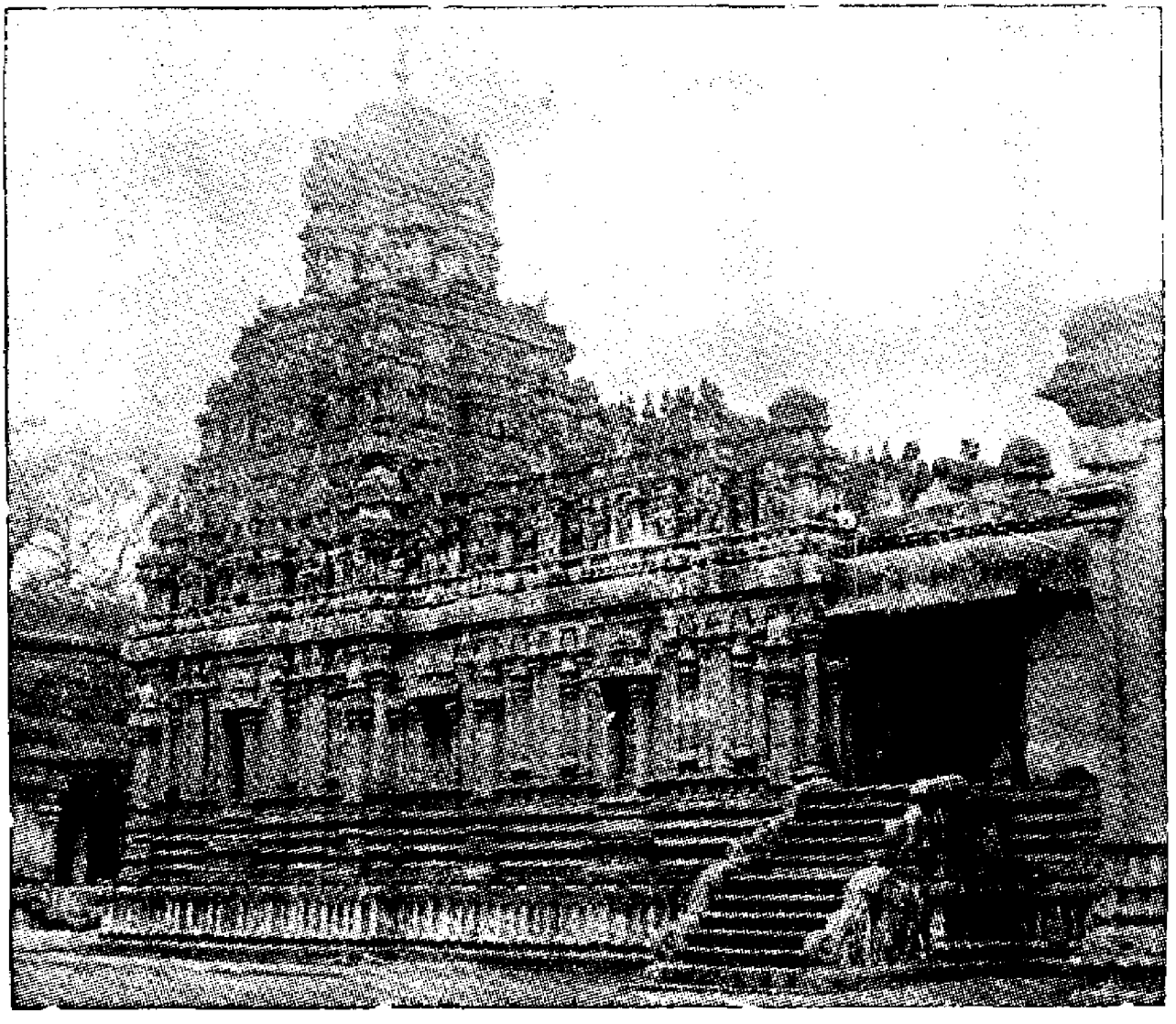
THANJAVUR

(Not to Scale)

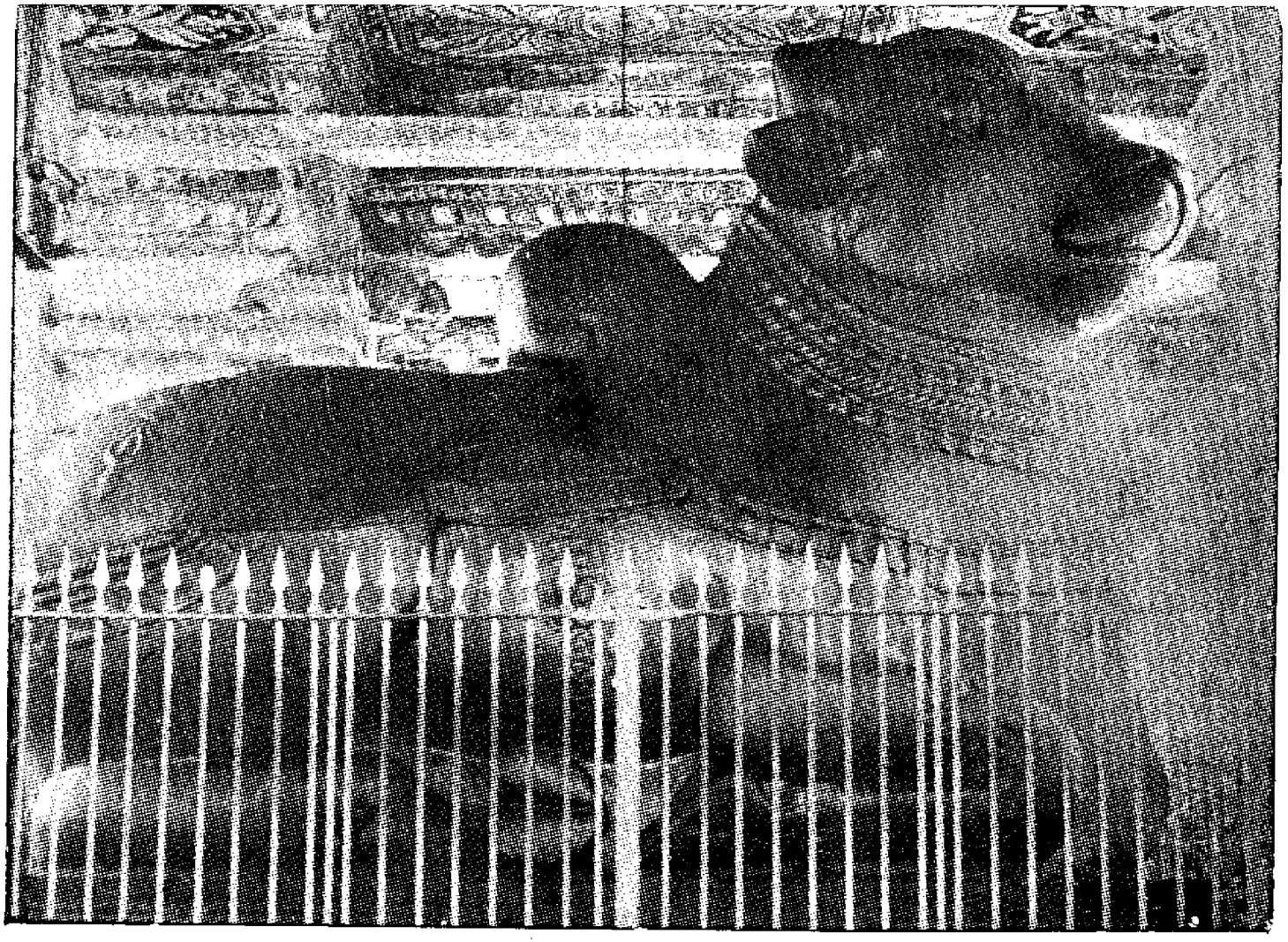




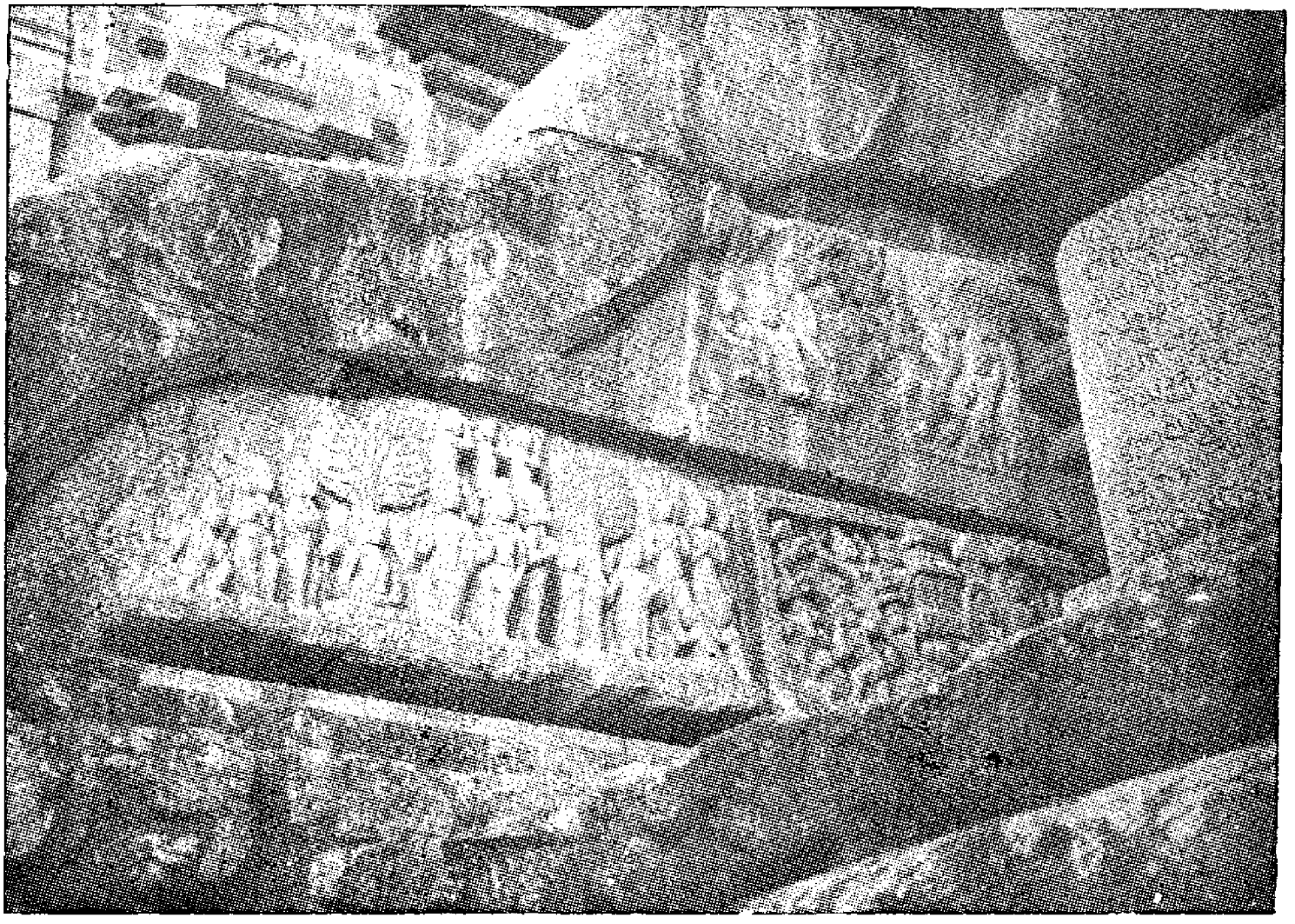
Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple Vimanam
Thanjavur.



Shrine of Lord Subramaniar
Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple
Thanjavur.



The Monolithic Nandhi
Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur.



Buddha sitting under Bodhi Tree
Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur.

Dance Scene
Painting in Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur.

Sastha
Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple
Thanjavur.

There are twelve Dwarapalakas, each with a height of 12', each made of a single stone. Even while one remembers that it was the most powerful Chola Emperor who constructed these things, one cannot help wondering how human power assisted by very little mechanical contrivance could achieve such magnificent results.

The Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam, Sthapanamandapam, Narthanamandapam and the Vadyamandapam have all been constructed with an eye for details. In the sanctum sanctorum is the huge Sivalingam called Sri Brihadeeswarar. The entrance is flanked by the imposing figures of Dwarapalakas.

The visitor could see in the niches on the four walls of the central shrine sculptures of rare workmanship. There are Ganesar, Lakshmi, Bikshadanar, Suladevar, Dakshinamurthy, Markandeya, Natarajar, Lingodhbhavar, Arthanareeswarar, Gangadharar, Kalyanasundarar and Mahishasuramardhini.

One can worship in the temple, Vinayagar, Natarajar and Chandeswarar. The figure of Natarajar is a piece of art. The divine consort, Brahannayaki is in a separate sanctum. It is a later addition said to have been made by Konerinmaikondan, a Pandya King of the Thirteenth Century. The inner shrine of Lord Subramaniar in the north-west corner, though attributed to a later date, is considered as an exquisite piece of decorative art. It is "a perfect gem of carved stone work, the tooling of the stone in the most exquisitely delicate and elaborate patterns is as clear and sharp as the day it left the sculptor's hands".

There is a small shrine dedicated to Karur Thevar, behind the main temple. He is said to have been invited by Raja Raja to consecrate the great temple which the King had built. He is worshipped with great veneration by the devotees.

The vertical base of the imposing vimanam over the Garba Graha is divided horizontally into two sections by cornices and the two compartments are rich in excellent sculptures. A notable feature in the ornamentation of the tower is the Vaishnavite type of carving, though the ornamentation of the other parts is Saivite. This is explained by the

fact that the tower was repaired during the time of the Nayaks who were Vaishnavites. The figure of an European with a bowler's hat among the sculptures is interesting.

The walls of the inner corridor around the Arthamandapam contain Chola fresco paintings, over most of which there are Nayak paintings of later times. As regards the sculptural wealth and exquisite painting of the temple, Dr. C. Sivaramamurthy states as follows on the booklet "*Chola Temples*" published by the Department of Archaeology, Government of India.

"The dark passage surrounding the sanctum of the temple contains important specimens of sculptural art. Here there are three colossal sculptures, respectively located in the south, west and north and representing Siva as holding a spear, seated Siva carrying a sword and trident and with fierce mien and Siva with ten arms dancing in the *Chatura* pose as Vishnu plays the drum and Devi sits in *Padmasana* with a lotus-bud and rosary in her hands.

The entire wall-space and ceiling of the passage were originally covered with exquisite paintings, most of them now obscured by a coat of painting executed during the Nayak period in the Seventeenth Century. The original paintings, as far as they have been exposed, are mainly on the western and northern walls. On the western side, the entire wall-space is occupied by a huge panel in which Siva as Dakshinamurthi is shown seated on tiger-skin in a *Yogic* pose approximating the *Maharajalila* with the *Paryankabandha* or *Yoga-Patta* across his waist and right knee, disinterestedly watching the dance of two *Apsarases* (celestial nymphs), while Vishnu, dwarf *Ganas* and other celestial musicians play on the drum and other instruments, a few princely figures watch the scene and two saints, Sundarar and Cheraman, hurry to the spot on elephant and horse. Up and further away is depicted a temple (architecturally a typical early Chola one) with Natarajar enshrined in it outside which are seated princely devotees. Further down is painted the story of how Siva came down in the form of an old

man with a document in his hand to establish his right to carry away Sundarar on his marriage day to His abode at Tiruvennainallur. Still below is a lively scene of women cooking and food being served during the marriage-festivity. Beyond this, on the other side of the wall, is a large figure of Natarajar dancing in the Golden Hall at Chidambaram with priests and other devotees on one side and a stately prince, obviously Raja Raja and three of his Queen with followers including *Kanchukis* and other attendants carrying roads of office behind them. On the opposite wall are some charming miniature figures of graceful women. A little further up is Raja Raja with *Guru* Karuvur Devar. Beyond this, on the wall opposite the northern one and facing the passage, are five heads peeping out of a partially-exposed painting.

The entire northern wall is covered by a gigantic figure of Tripurantaka Siva on a chariot driven by Brahma. Tripurantaka, accompanied by Karthikeya on peacock, Ganesa on mouse and Kali on lion, with Nandhi in front of the chariot, is in the *Alidha* pose of a warrior with eight arms, all carrying weapons and in the act of using a mighty bow to overcome a host of aggressive and fearless demons with their womenfolk clinging to them. This painting is the greatest master-piece of the Chola artist, distinguished by its power, grandeur, rhythm and composition and unparalleled by any contemporary painting or sculpture.

This representation of Siva shows the earlier Pallava tradition, as in the Chola period Tirupurantaka generally stands in the *Abhanga* and sometimes in the *Tri-Bhanga* pose, with one of his legs planted on the head of either of dwarf Apasmara or a lion. This great panel portrays several sentiments in one : the heroic sentiment in the expression on Tripurantaka's face and form and in that of the vigorous *Rakshasas* in action ; the emotion of pity in the sorrowful faces of their women clinging to them in despair ; the spirit of wonder in the paraphernalia of Gods surrounding Siva; and the sense of the grotesque in the attitude of the dwarf *Ganas* and of Ganesa hastening on his mouse. The Cholas being

great warriors and conquerors, and Raja Raja himself the greatest of them all, it is in the fitness of things that the theme of Thripurantaka, the mighty warrior-god is glorified here, virtually as the keynote of the Chola power.

The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinewy and the expression vivid and true to life; above all, there is an ease in the charming contours of the figures. They constitute the most valuable document of the painter's art during the days of the early Cholas, and it is interesting to note that all the grace of south Indian classical painting that is seen in the earlier Pallava paintings at Sittannavasal, Panamalai and Kanchipuram is continued in the present series.

The highest achievement in plastic art in the Chola period is revealed in the fine series of the eighty-one dance-poses in the tradium of Baratha Music carved all round the inner walls of the first floor of temple. They form an invaluable document in the history of Indian art and are the predecessors of the labelled dance poses on the Chidambaram gopuras, with the important difference that at Tanjavur, Siva himself, the Lord of dance (Nataraja), is depicted as the dancer".

According to Fergusson, "in nine cases out of ten, Dravidian temples were a fortuitous aggregation of parts arranged without a plan as accident dictated at the time of their erection". The one great exception to this rule, he went on to point out, "was to be found at Tanjore where the temple was commenced as a well-defined and stately plan which was preserved until its completion".

The temple abounds in inscriptions, most of them relating to Raja Raja and his successors. They reveal that Raja Raja endowed a large number of villages, money and cattle to the temple for its maintenance, daily worship, festivals, singing of devotional songs and dancing. He had also presented valuable jewels and ornaments. The temple now has jewellery of considerable value and sizable landed property.

The important festivals that are now celebrated in the temple are the Brahmothsavam in Chithirai, Sivarathri, Arudhra Darshanam, Thai Poosam, Masi Magham, Skandha Shasti, Panguni Uthiram and Vinayaga Chathurthi. In the Tamil month of Ayppasi (September-October) on the day of Sadhaya Nakshatram, the birth day of Raja Raja is celebrated on a grand scale. The eighteen day annual Brahmothsavam is the most important festival when thousands of people gather at this shrine. Daily poojas are performed four times.

The temple is one of the 88 temples under the administration of the Tanjore Palace Devasthanam. A list of these 88 temples is given separately. The administration is governed by a Scheme framed by Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department modified and confirmed in the High Court of Judicature at Madras in A.S. No. 263 of 1933 and by the order of The Ex-Hindu Religious Charitable Endowments Board in B.O. No. 4889 dated 4th November 1943. The administration is vested in the Hereditary Trustee in the line of succession of the descendants of Maharatta Prince late Shivajee Raja Saheb of Tanjore. The Hereditary Trustee is assisted in the administration by the Treasurer and Manager appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department, Government of Madras.

The administration of the various temples of the Tanjore Palace Devasthanam is distributed among eight Firkas under the control of Amins. Firkas 1 to 4 comprise Tanjore Town. Firka No. 5 consists of Sri Mariamman Koil and temples attached to it. Firka No. 6 is Aduthurai (Vada Kurangaduthurai) on the route between Thiruvaiyaru and Kumbakonam. Firka No. 7 is Darasuram near Kumbakonam. Firka No. 8 is Ammachatram and consists of temples at Ammachatram, Tiruvisainallur, Thiruvidaimarudhur etc.(Kumbakonam Taluk).

Under the Scheme of administration, the income of all the endowments relating to the above 88 temples are pooled together and distributed amongst them according to the need.

The Tanjore Art Gallery, where fine specimens of Gods and Goddesses from different places are exhibited, was established in 1951. The Saraswathi Mahal Library at Tanjore has a large collection of Palm Leaf manuscripts.

List of temples attached to the Palace Devasthanam Tanjore

I. TANJORE TALUK

A. Tanjore Fort :

1. Brahadeeswaraswamy Koil
2. Sankaranarayanaswamy Koil
3. Kali Amman Koil
4. Balaganapathi Koil
5. Thopparangatti Pillaiyar Koil
6. Aukasalai Pillaiyar Koil
7. Sivangi Pillaiyar Koil
8. Chetty Street Hanumar Koil
9. Sivalingaswamy Koil
10. Konkaneswaraswami Koil
11. Sannathi Pillaiyar Koil
12. Ayyankulam Viswanathar Koil
13. Kasi Viswanathaswami Koil
14. Prathapa Veera Hanumar Koil
15. Vijaya Ramaswami Koil
16. Navaneetha Krishnaswami Koil
17. Lakshatope Hanumar Koil
18. Boologa Krishnan Koil
19. Gurunathaswami Koil
20. Naduvelanathar Koil
21. Melavasal Subramaniaswamy Koil
22. Mannarswami Koil
23. Omali Pillaiyar Koil
24. Naganatha Pillaiyar Koil
25. Badra Kali Koil
26. Uthsava Kodiamman Koil
27. Theertha Sanjeevi Koil
28. Veera Hanumar Koil
29. Sivendraswamy Koil
30. Prasanna Venkatesa Perumal Koil
31. Govindaraja Perumal Koil

32. Ellai Amman Koil
33. Bazaar Ramaswamy Koil
34. Kaliyuga Venkatesa Perumal Koil
35. Varadaraja Perumal Koil
36. Keela Kothandaramaswami Koil
37. Keela Kothandaramaswami Koil
38. Manikarnikeswaraswami Koil
39. Bajana Salai Vitoba Koil
40. Vellai Pillaiyar Koil
41. South Main Street Koil
42. Viswanathaswami Koil
43. Madana Gopalaswami Koil
44. 108 Tirupathi
45. Janarthana Perumal Koil
46. Kalanjiyam Lakshmi Koil
47. Gurukula Sanjivi Koil
48. Amirtha Venkatesar Koil
49. Poorva Sanjivi Koil
50. Dakshina Sanjivi Koil
51. Vettaimarga Sanjivi Koil
52. Ananda Pillaiyar Koil
53. Karpoora Pillaiyar Koil
54. Chathurbuja Varadarajar Koil
55. Veerabadraswami Koil
56. Vallam Pattabiramar Koil

B. Karunthattangudi

57. Sithi Vinayagaswami Koil
58. Vasishteswaraswami Koil
59. Meenakshi Sundareswarar Koil
60. Naganathaswami Koil
61. Naganathaswami Koil
62. Vadabathra Kali Amman Koil
63. Padithurai Venkatesa Perumal Koil

C. Vennar Bank

64. Ananda Valli Amman Koil
65. Melasinga Perumal Koil
66. Mani Kunna Perumal Koil
67. Neelamega Perumal Koil

68. Kalyana Venkatesa Perumal Koil
69. Velur Varadarajar Koil
70. Chockanathaswami Koil
71. Sundareswaraswami Koil
72. Kalastheeswaraswami Koil
73. Kodi Amman koil
74. Thalikeswaraswami Koil

D. Arasur

75. Agastheeswaraswami Koil

E. Thiruvadi

76. Venugopalaswami Koil

F. Manambychavadi

77. Vijayamandapam Thyagarajaswami Koil

G. Tanjore Fort

78. Thriambageswaraswami Koil
79. Melavasal Ranganathaswami Koil

H. Sri Mariamman Koil

80. Sri Mariamman Koil
81. Sri Kothandaramaswami Koil
82. Kailasanathaswami Koil
83. Ukkara Kali Amman Koil

II PAPANASAM TALUK

I. Aduthurai

84. Dayanitheswaraswami Koil

J. Darasuram

85. Ayravatheeswaraswami Koil

K. Sakwarambal puram

86. Saptharishiswaraswami Koil

Tiruvisainallur

87. Sivayoganathaswami Koil

L. Thiruvidaimarudhur

88. Narthanavinayagaswami Koil

THANJAVUR.

Sri Bangaru Kamakshiamman Temple.

To the north of Brihadeeswarar Temple at a distance of about two kilometres is situated this famous temple dedicated to Sri Kamakshiamman.

The presiding deity, a gold idol in standing posture, was originally in the temple of Kamakshiamman at Kancheepuram. There is an interesting history behind the installation of this idol in this temple.

Years ago, fearing the desecration of temples by Muslims, the ardent devotees of the Kamakshiamman Temple there, removed the gold idol of the Goddess from Kancheepuram and went southwards. The small band of devotees successfully brought the idol to Thanjavur with great difficulty sojourning for a number of years in different places. Thuljaji Maharaja, the then Ruler of Thanjavur received the idol with great honours. The idol came to the town in 1780. The present temple was constructed in 1786.

The temple with its small gopuram is in a busy locality and attracts devotees, round the year. Renovations were performed in the years 1941 and 1963 and a Kumbabishegam was performed on both occasions in the presence of His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. On Fridays, special worship is offered. Daily poojas are done six times according to the rules laid down in the Grantha work, Sowbagya Chintamani. It is said that the priests of the temple are descendants of the group of people, who brought the idol to Thanjavur.

Navarathri is the most important annual festival here. A characteristic feature of the temple is that no procession is taken out during any festival.

Only eleven Abishegams are done to Sri Kamakshiamman in a year and they are done only in the evenings.

It is said that in ancient days the temple affairs were looked after by the temple priests themselves, who were its

Hereditary Trustees. Sri Shyama Sastrigal, who is one of the trinities of Karnatic music, was one of the priests offering poojas in this temple.

PUNNAINALLUR

Sri Mariamman Temple

Situated on the outskirts of Thanjavur, Punnainallur popularly known as Thanjavur Mariamman Kovil has derived considerable importance from time immemorial in both legend and history. The temple attracts thousands of devotees from all parts of the district throughout the year. Thanks to the munificence of its devotees, the temple has been given a face-lift in the recent past.

Punnainallur lies at a distance of about five kilometres east of Thanjavur and is easily accessible by bus. It is a Panchayat, having a population of 3,112 (1,532 males and 1,580 females) according to the 1961 Census. The village with its famous shrine is a place of pilgrimage round the year. Town buses ply between Thanjavur and Punnainallur at regular intervals.

The temple, facing east, has three prakarams. It occupies an area of about one acre. It has a 90 feet high Rajagopuram, which is comparatively of recent origin. There are several mandapams here viz., the Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam, Narthanamandapam, Dwajamandapam, Alankaramandapam and the Thirumalaipathimandapam. There are in the temple paintings of the different forms of Ashta Sakthi viz., Gajalakshmi, Veera Lakshmi, Sowbhagya Lakshmi, Santhana Lakshmi, Dhana Lakshmi, Dhanya Lakshmi, Vidhya Lakshmi and Karunya Lakshmi. The Sukravaramandapam in the Amman Sannadhi has beautifully carved pillars. The Sthala Viruksham of the temple is "Vembu" (i.e., Neem Tree) and the sacred Theertham is Mani Muktha Nadhi (Vadavar River). The presiding deity of this shrine, Goddess Mariamman,

is represented by an idol made of sand over an ant-hill and covered with a silver kavacham. Sundays are considered to be the most auspicious days for worshipping the Goddess, when a large number of devotees, mostly women and children pay their homage.

Poojas are performed four times daily. Once in five years anointment with Thailam (oil) is performed. Abhishegam is performed daily thrice to Durgai whose sanctum is located to the right of the presiding deity, facing north.

The temple owns both antique and modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamond, worth about Rs. 32,000 mostly donated by King Sri Venkoji Maharaja Chatrapathi. Of these, the diamond crown, gold Ottiyanam, "Bullacku" and the stone-studed Magara Padhakkam deserve mention. The Brahmothsavam which takes place in the months of Adi-Avani (August-September) is the most important festival of this temple. The floating festival takes place every year in the month of Purattasi (September-October).

The temple has 451·25 acres of wet and 58·02 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 57,000 by way of rent. The temple has a large collection of costly vahanas which are preserved with great care. Of these, the silver horse, silver rishabam and the glass palanquin deserve mention. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to about Rs. 30,000 while, its income under Archana and Abishega charges is about Rs. 15,000 per annum.

The temple which comes under the purview of the Thanjavur Palace Devasthanam is looked after by a single Hereditary Trustee, Rajaram Rajasaheb, who is in charge of the temple.

Many are the stories that account for the existence of this Goddess Mariamman and the temple. A story goes that a Chola King, Keerthi Cholan, had no issue to succeed him. Being an ardent and regular devotee of this Goddess, he was gifted with a son, Theva Cholan, as a heir to the throne.

The story goes that King Venkoji Maharaja Chatrapathi once went on a pilgrimage to the southern parts of the country. On his return journey from Rameswaram, the King had the opportunity to stay, with his retinue, at Samayapuram Mariamman Kovil near Tiruchirapalli. The King had a dream that night, when a young girl, styling herself as Mariamman, asked the King to construct a "pucca" temple for Her as she was in the vicinity of a forest full of "Punnai" Trees and disappeared. Next morning the King returned to his capital and made speedy arrangements for the installation of this Goddess. The deity of this temple later came to be known as Punnainallur Mariamman.

Thuljaji Raja, Son of Venkoji Maharaja, had a daughter, with very poor eye sight. The king was very much worried over her ailment. It is said that he worshipped this Goddess Mariambal who appeared in his dream and asked him to go to Punnainallur Mariamman Sannadhi with his daughter where she would regain her eye sight. As per the dream, King Thuljaji went to Mariamman Sannadhi with his daughter and prayed for the restoration of her eye sight. While receiving the Deepa Arathanai she had a shock and a tendency of losing something from her eyes and immediately she was able to gain her eye sight.

Being overwhelmed by this incident, the King decided to renovate this temple. He deputed priest (gurukkal) for pooja. Usually in all Mariamman Temples, Poojaris are appointed for Pooja and other functions. The king was also fortunate enough to meet Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra Swamigal, who was passing through that village. The king immediately narrated this incident to him and requested the Swamiji to stay till Kumbabishegam. Accordingly the saint made a powerful "yanthram", (peetam) to be placed under the idol of the Goddess, and celebrated the Kumbabishegam on a grand scale. Mariambalpuram now called Pandaravadai in Papanasam Taluk is a village gifted to the temple by Thuljaji Raja.

Thanjavur kings endowed enormous landed gifts for the maintenance of this temple. As the Thanjavur Maharajas and

Queens have to go through hazardous routes for dharsan, an underground passage ('Surangam') was constructed from their Palace to this shrine. The entrance of the surangam stands as a monument even now, behind the temple.

Another story is that an European by name, Mr. Wilson had an ailing eye. Through his ardent devotion to this deity he was cured.

A saint, Sri Padahacheri Swamigal, was instrumental for the renovation of the temple and an image of the Swamigal could be seen in the Prakaram behind the sanctum sanctorum.

Devotees suffering from small-pox take vows such as "Thotti Kattuthal" (storing water in the sanctum or in the Prakaram in a tube-like structure to signify cooling effect). Giving salt to the temple and mixing jaggery in the temple tank are some of the practices followed by the devotees. A nominal fee is collected for this purpose. Members of the public give cattle, fowl etc., as votive offerings. An elephant has been given to the temple by a devotee. A Ther (car) costing about Rs. 10,000 has been donated by another devotee.

There is a separate shrine for Pechi Amman, where flesh food is offered to the Goddess. Mariamman of Punnainallur is deeply venerated in the locality and the devotees see a divine grace in her. Many are those who consider themselves blessed by this popular Goddess.

THIRUVAIYARU

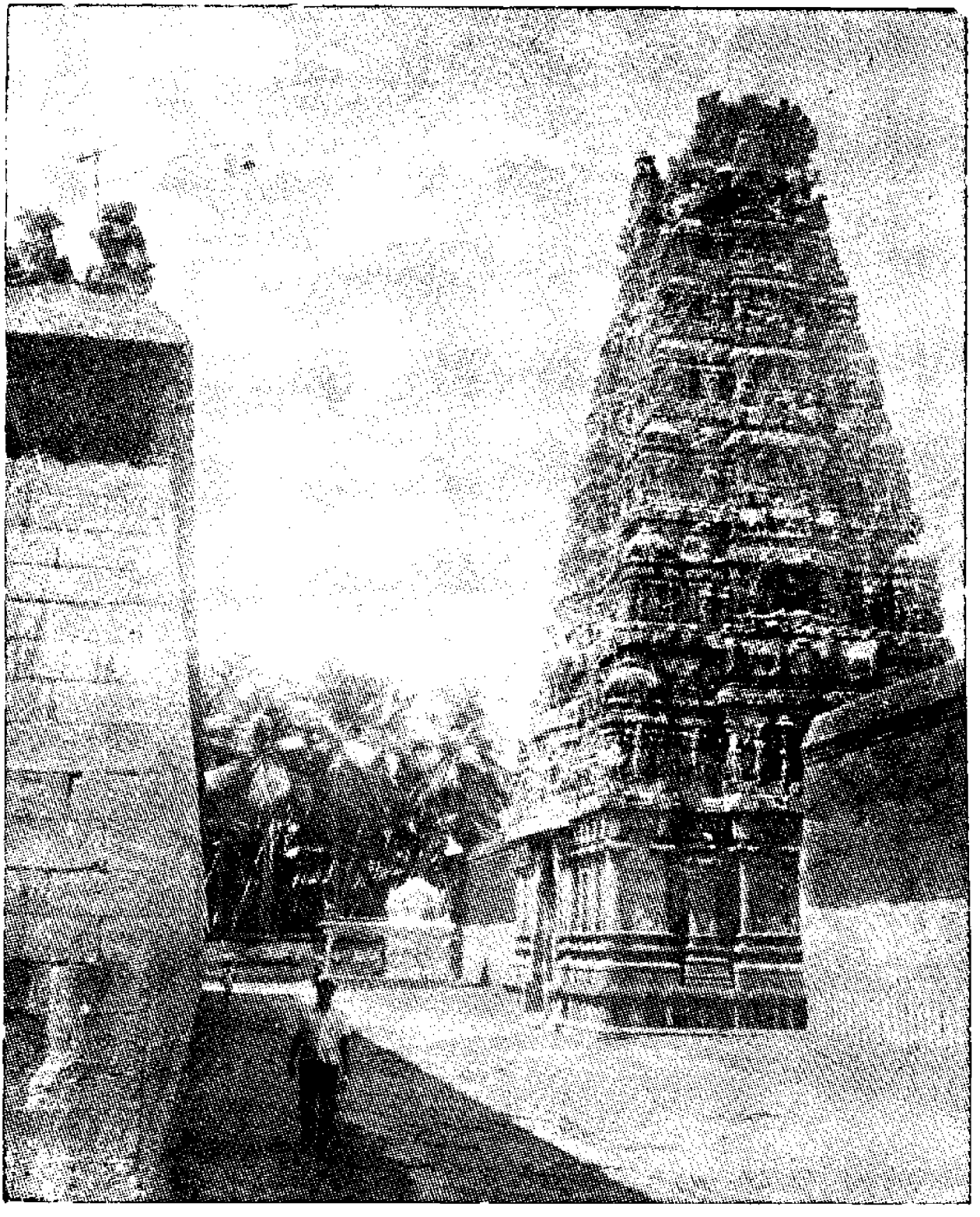
Sri Panchanadheeswaraswamy Temple

Thiruvaiyaru, one of the most ancient and sacred pilgrim centres in the district of Thanjavur, lies at a distance of about ten kilometres to the north west of Thanjavur, on the left bank of the river Cauvery. Five branches of the holy river Cauvery flow close to the town. Situated in a fertile neighbourhood

surrounded by luxuriant crops, vegetable gardens and trees and possessing some fine buildings, this place has a charm of its own. It is considered as holy as Benares. Some pious people hold that those who die here attain "Moksha". In fact there is a famous saying that it is holier than Benares. ("காசிக்கு வீசம் அதிகம்.")

The reputed shrine of Sri Panchanadheeswarar in this place is considered the chief among the seven famous shrines called "Sapthasthalams" viz., Tiruppayanam, Tiruchchendurai, Tiruvedikudi, Tirukandiyur, Tiruppanthurai, Tillaisthanam and Tiruvaiyaru. This sacred place was the home of several well known musicians and composers. The great saint and singer Thyagaraja lived and died here and the annual festival at his samadhi on the bank of the river which is attended by musicians and music lovers is very popular. While the panoramic view presented by the temple and the river Cauvery will arrest the attention of one and all, the flamboyant richness of its sculpture will interest the art-lover.

Thiruvaiyaru is a Town Panchayat, having a population of 11,171 (5,595 males and 5,576 females) according to the 1961 Census. It is easily accessible and is connected with important towns by both bus and train. Thanks to this shrine, the village is a place of pilgrimage round the year. Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundaramurthy Nayanar had all visited this shrine and sung several sacred hymns in praise of the Lord here. Legend has it that it was here that Appar had the sight of Kailas due to divine grace. This sacred Siva sthalam situated among sylvan surroundings is known by a number of names: Ayyaru, Panchanadham, Bhoologa Kailasam etc. Ayyaru or Panchanadham is taken as representing the five great waters viz., Suryapushkarani, Chandrapushkarani, Ganga Theertham, Palaru and Nandhi Theertham. Though there are many holy places on the bank of the river Cauvery, the fact that the exponents of Saivism have called this shrine alone as "Kauverikkottam" underlines the importance they attached to this place.



Sri Panchanadheeswaraswamy Temple Rajagopuram
Thiruvaiyaru.

The temple which faces east has five prakarams and several spacious mandapams such as the Mukthimandapam, Asthana-mandapam, Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam, Prasanga Sabha Mandapam, Sokkattanmandapam etc. It is situated on a fifteen-acre land. There are separate sancta here for the presiding deity, Panchanadheeswarar or Ayyarappar and Goddess Dharmasamvardhini or Anjalai, both facing east. The Swamy and Amman Sannadhis are picturesquely crowned by Raja-gopurams and present an inspiring view. In the second prakaram, Sri Somaskandhar has got a separate shrine with Japesa Mandapam nearby. Great sanctity is attached to this Japesa Mandapam. It is said that Panchakshara Japam, when performed in this mandapam, will confer immense benefit on the devotee. Such a mandapam exists only in two other places viz., Nagapattinam and Benares. This mandapam is now popularly called "Mukthi Mandapam."

"Then Kailayam" or Southern Kailasam is a shrine situated in the southern part of the fourth prakaram of the temple of Ayyarappar. There is an image of Saint Appar in this temple. This shrine was renovated by Panchavanmadevi, the wife of Rajendra Chola-I.

"Vada Kailayam" or Northern Kailasam is another shrine situated in the northern part of the fourth prakaram. It was built by Olakamadeviar, the wife of King Raja Raja-I (985 A.D.). There are several interesting stone inscriptions here. One of them relates to the 21st year of the reign of Raja Raja-I. It is the oldest available in the temple. That the temple should have been built before 1006 A.D., i.e., nearly 963 years ago, is evident from this. There is a separate shrine here for Lord Muruga in the western part of the second prakaram. As the Lord appears here with bow and other weapons of war in His hands, He is popularly called Dhanusu Subramaniar.

The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Panchanadheeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. Ayyarappar, Semporjotheeswarar, Ayyarudaya Adigal, Ayyatrin Peruman, Kailasanathar, Japesar and Pranadharthiharar are the other names of the Lord.

In the first prakaram of the temple are found the idols of Sapthamathar, Nayanmars, Dakshinamurthy, Umamaheswarar, Adhi Vinayagar, Sankaranarayanar, Brahma, Thirupurasundari, Panchabhootha Lingams and the Navagrahas. The festival idols of all these deities and others are found housed in the second prakaram. Attractive paintings depicting old puranic stories are seen on the walls of this prakaram. There are also several other sub-deities viz., Chandrasekharar, Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Goddess Mahalakshmi, Saraswathy, Chandikeswarar, Jwarahareswarar, etc. There is a separate shrine here for Sri Hariguru Siva Yoga Dakshinamurthy in the first prakaram of Sri Ayyarappar's Temple, for whom great significance is attached. Holding a skull in the right hand which points upward and with '*Chinmudra*' in the other which points downward, and having a trident in the left hand which points upward and *Sivagnanabodham* in the other which points downward, He appears to be ferocious with a tortoise under His foot. Trampling the tortoise seems to underline the necessity to control the senses.

Situated to the north-east of Ayyarappar's Temple is the shrine of His consort Dharmasamvardhini. She is also called by several names such as Aramvalartha Nayagi, Thirupurasundari, Dharmambigai etc. There are two prakarams here and a Rajagopuram.

A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the idol of Aalkondar who stands on the right side of the tower over the southern entrance. In His presence a kind of incense called "*Kunguliam*" is always burnt. He puts up a heroic appearance with Yama, the God of Death, lying under His feet. In this connection it may be mentioned that there is an interesting legend according to which a young boy by name Sucharita was killed by Yama. At that time the boy was worshipping the God of the five rivers, as instructed by sage Vasishta. This enraged the Lord who is said to have killed Yama but later restored him to life again, on condition that Yama should not meet out punishment in the Hell to those who breathed their last at Thiruvaiyaru or within the region where the fragrance of the burnt Kunguliam permeated. In

evidence of this, incense is continually burnt in front of God Aalkondar (i.e., He who protects men).

Poojas are performed six times daily by hereditary priests according to Karana and Kamika Agamam. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 1,61,145 mostly donated by the Dharmapura Adheenam. The flagmast in front of the Swamy sannadhi was recently gold plated. The cost thereof was borne by an ardent devotee at Thiruvaiyaru. Kumbabishegam was performed in 1960. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 365·52 acres of wet and 242·79 acres of dry lands, 29 shops and 20 houses, apart from 92 vacant plots, which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,00,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the temple's upkeep and for its day-to-day activities. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 1,500, while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 600 per annum. Besides, the temple is also maintaining two free rest houses in the Amman Sannadhi with modern amenities.

There are silver Rishaba Vahanams, silver Lotus with canopy, a silver Padichattam, peacock and bandicoot mounts.

On the New Moon day, every month, Lord Ayyarappar is taken in a procession to the Pushpamandapa ghat of the river Cauvery, where He is believed to bestow His grace on the people, who take holy bath in the river at that time.

The Thirukkalyanam festival of Thirunandhi Devar takes place in the month of Panguni each year at Thirumazhapadi. Lord Ayyarappar along with Aramvalartha Nayagi goes to Thirumazhapadi to grace the marriage.

The main festival, which extends over twelve days, takes place in the month of Chithirai. The fifth-day festival is popular, as on that day the Lord is said to transform Himself into a Saiva Acharya and worships Himself. It is on that day that Maheswara pooja is done to the deities, Swamis, and Saiva Acharyas who go to Thiruvaiyaru and six other places from Tiruppazhanam.

A noteworthy feature here is that Lord Ayyarappar starts in a procession along with Goddess Aramvalartha Nayagi, Nandhi and Swayamprakasa Ammai and after visiting Thiruppazhanam and six other holy places, where He is honoured and worshipped, returns along with the deities of the said places to Ayyaru, the next morning. This festival falls on the Full Moon day in the Visaka Asterism in the Tamil month of Chithirai. The floating festival is held on Avani Moolam day. The festival commemorating Saint Appar's darshan of Kailas falls on Adi Amavasai day.

The following are the several interesting legends connected with the temple ;

It is said that the Lord had worshipped Himself. One of the 24 Adhi Saiva Archakas of Ayyarappar Temple, went on pilgrimage to Benares. During his absence the other priests encroached upon his properties and rights. His helpless family sought refuge at the feet of the Lord, who came in the form of an old Archaka and carried on his duties. When the original priest returned from the pilgrimage, the divine substitute called the former an impostor. When the astonished judges upheld the claim of the substitute, He suddenly transformed Himself into his divine form and blessed the devoted group. Following the tradition, on the fifth day of the annual festival, the Lord as the priest is supposed to perform pooja to Himself. A crystal Lingam in Somaskandha Mandapam still bears testimony to this episode.

Another legend is Sage Silada who had no son for a long time worshipped the Lord here. The Lord commanded him to perform the Putrakameshti Yaga and he was told that a child placed in a box would be found by him while ploughing the sacrificial ground and that he would live up to an age of sixteen years only. Silada performed the sacrifice and discovered a box. When he opened the box eagerly, what met his eyes was a divine form with four arms and three eyes with Moon on the crest. Immediately a voice was heard from above instructing him to close the box and then open the same. He did so and to his profound surprise he found inside a beautiful

child. The child was given the name of Japeswara. The boy grew up and before he was fourteen years old, had mastered all the Vedhas, Agamas, and the Sastras. The parents were struck with remorse at the thought that he had only two more years to live and on coming to know the reason of their sorrow, Japeswara went to Ayyarappar Temple and began to perform a severe penance in the Brahma and Vishnu Theerthams. The reptiles and the fish in the water fed themselves upon his flesh and he was reduced to a mere skeleton. God then appeared before him, sprinkled on him the five waters, restored his body to its original unimpaired condition, and also blessed him with the traditional sixteen gifts. Japeswara was married to Swayamprakasa the grand-daughter of Vasishta, daughter of Vyagrapadha, and sister of Upamanya in the month of Panguni, when the Punarpoosa constellation was ruling. Finally Japeswara received the Upadesa of the Lord, transported to the Heaven and became the head of the attendants of Siva. He obtained the honour of guarding the main gate there and became the prime founder of the line of Saiva Acharyas. He bears the name of Nandhi Devar. In commemoration of this, Thirukkalyana Uthsavam is being celebrated even today during the month of Panguni on a grand scale.

It is said that the Lord mounted on the bull gave a glorious darshan to Agasthya. The sage after having a bath in Suryapushkarani came to this holy shrine and performed penance in order to attain a short statured form, which would facilitate worship at God's feet. This was readily granted. He then wished to see Kailasam or Heaven. The Lord imparted to him the Panchakshara and bade him plunge into the Surya-pushkarani. Agasthya emerged at Kailasam and stayed there.

In order that the people may know the greatness of the Mother, the Lord here ordered Her to perform all the charities with only two measures of paddy granted to Her. The Mother gladly accepted the quantity so provided for the charities and, through Her unlimited mystic powers, carried out all the thirty-two kinds of charitable acts as ordained in the Scriptures for the benefit of the devotees. She was thenceforth known as Aramvalartha Nayagi.

This is one of the twenty-seven Devasthanams belonging to the Dharmapura Adheenam.

The sculptures of this holy place belong to a very early era. The image of Brahma here is a very beautiful one. Aalkondar, the guardian a deity of this place. and Yama under His foot are also beautiful images instilling into the minds of the devotees, a sense of heroism and awe at once. Research scholars of sculpture say that the sculptural works seen on the outer wall of the tabernacle in the "South Kailayam". appear to be the work of the Chalukyas in the Deccan and that similar works are found at Hemavati in Anantapur District. That the temple is a very old one is evident from the type of sculpture.

Priyavrata, a king of the Solar race, first constructed the temple in this holy place. The great warrior king Karikal Peruvalathan who had extended his sway upto the Himalayas repaired this temple, in obedience to the mandate of God. Vimaladithan of Venginad renewed it again. Olokamadevi, the wife of King Raja Raja-I, built the "North Kailayam" and gave it her name. From these facts, it is evident that this holy place with its temple has been under the protection and patronage of the kings of the land. Noted for its historical interest and cultural importance, the hoary shrine of Thiruvaiyaru attracts devotees from far and near.

KOVILADI

Sri Appala Ranganathaswamy and Divyagnaneswarar Temples

Koviladi, which was the scene of hostilities during the Eighteenth Century, lies in the extreme north-west Thanj vur taluk in between the Coleroon and the Cauvery. Budalur, about sixteen kilometres from this place, is a nearest railway station on the Thanjavur—Trichy route. The population of this Panchayat is 3,017 according to 1961 Census.

There are two shrines in this place, one dedicated to Sri Appala Ranganathaswamy and the other to Divyagnaneswarar.

Sri Appala Ranganathaswamy Temple

This temple facing west dates back to Chola times.

The name of the presiding deity is Sri Appala Ranganathar and the Goddess Sri Kamalavalli Thayar. The temple occupies fairly a large space about 2·45 acres. The front gopuram is of exquisite workmanship. There are two prakarams. The image of the presiding deity in a reclining posture. is made of brick and mortar. The festival deity, Aranganathar, is made of five metals (Panchalogam). Nammalwar, Perialwar, Thirumazhisai Alwar and Thirumangai Azhwar had sung Prabandhams and Pasurams in praise of this temple. Koviladi is referred to as Thirupeyarnagar. Six poojas are performed every day.

An interesting inscription in the temple records the grant, by a Vijayanagar King, of the country round Tiruchirapalli to a prince of that family named Vittala, A number of other inscriptions in this and the neighbouring village of Thiruchanampundi belonging to the Chola and Pallava periods record sale or gift of land to the temple.

The temple owns about 4·67 acres of wet lands and 4·88 acres of dry lands. The annual income out of these is about Rs. 2,575. Ancient jewels worth about Rs. 4,000 are in this temple. Vahanas like Garudan, Hanuman, elephant, horse, palanquin, car and Chandra Prabhai are here. Vaikunta Ekadhasi festival for ten days in Margazhi and the Brahmothsavam during Panguni for twelve days are the important festivals. "Swarga Vasal" will be opened on the Vaikunta Ekadhasi day in Margazhi as in Sri Rangam Temple and the festival is celebrated on a grand scale on that day.

There is a legend that sage Durvasar inflicted a curse on King Uparajitha. To get rid of it, the King had arranged to feed a lakh of Brahmins. When all the Brahmins went for

their bath, Lord Maha Vishnu came as an old Brahmin and requested the King to feed him immediately as He was hungry. To the bewilderment of one and all, the old guest consumed the entire food in three quick gulps. The predicament of the King could well be imagined. Thereafter, the guset asked the King to show him a place where he could rest for a while. Without showing any signs of anger the King coolly entreated Him to take himself comfortable in his (king's) own bed room. But the next moment the guest disappeared and there stood before the King, Lord Maha Vishnu. The King was absolved of his sin.

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department has appointed three Trustees, who are managing the temple affairs.

Sri Divyagnaneswarar Temple

This Saivite temple in the village is of epigraphical importance. An inscription in the temple reveals details about a famine during the time of Vikrama Chola.

The divine consort is known as Akhilandeswari. The Skandha Sashti festival is celebrated in the temple on a considerable scale for six days.

NEMAM

Sri Ayravatheeswaraswamy Temple

This temple is situated in Nemam village, about eleven kilometres from Budalur railway station. It is understood that it was built about 1,000 years ago, during the period of King Raja Raja Chola. The village Nemam has a population of 1,312 according to 1961 Census.

Sri Ayravatheeswarar is the presiding deity and Alankaravalli is the divine consort of this temple. The outer walls of the

sanctum sanctorum are replete with inscriptions. At present there is only one prakaram. The other prakarams are in a ruined condition. The temple has a Rajagopuram. There are two separate sancta here for the presiding deity and the Goddess. Dakshinamurthy, Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Mahalakshmi, Chandikeswarar, Bairavar, Lakshmi Narayana Perumal, Navagrahas and Surya (Sun) are the other deities in the outer prakaram of this temple. There are a number of festival deities in this temple.

A special feature about this temple is that surface water oozes out in the sanctum sanctorum and the area around it and it is baled out frequently as in Jambukeswarar Temple in Tiruvanaikoil, near Tiruchi.

Three poojas are performed daily. There are some ancient jewels. Silver Kavachams are available for the presiding deity and the Goddess of this temple. The temple owns 14·00 acres of wet lands and 16·33 acres of dry lands. The annual income derived out of these lands is estimated to be about Rs. 4,000.

Skandha Sashti is an important festival. There are some other festivals also celebrated now and then. rishabam, peacock, bandicoot (Moonjuru), swan, goat and Soorapadman are the vahanas available in this temple.

An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) department are managing this temple.

TIRUKKATTUPPALLI

Sri Agniswaraswamy Temple

This temple is situated west of Tanjore and about eight kilometres from Budalur railway station. It is the scene of the ruins of an old Fort which was captured by the English

in 1771, garrisoned by them in 1781 and taken from them by Hyder Ali in the same year. There are a few inscriptions in this temple relating to Pandya and Vijayanagar periods. It is understood that this temple was built about 1,200 years ago and the mandapam of the divine consort was built by Sundara Pandyan. The population of this town is 8,038 according to 1961 Census.

Sri Agniswaraswamy is the presiding deity and Soundaranayagi is the Goddess of this temple. Four poojas are performed daily. The temple occupies about 1·06 acres of land. There is an old Rajagopuram. Renovation of this Rajagopuram at a cost of about Rs. 40,000 is to be taken up shortly.

The small inner gopuram has some fine pieces of art. There are three prakarams, an Arthamandapam and a Mahamandapam in this temple. The level of the sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity is lower than the ground level. The sacred "Vanni" Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here.

Saints Appar and Sambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple.

The temple is having some modern jewels worth about Rs. 800. The temple owns 7·00 acres of wet lands, 1·97 acres of dry lands and ten houses, through which an annual income of about Rs. 1,600 is derived. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated during Panguni, for ten days. Some wooden mounts (vahanas) like rishabam, horse, peacock and bandicoot (Moonjuru) are here.

An Executive Officer and five Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

CHOLA :

Raja Raja I, (985-1014 A.D.)
Rajadhi Raja I, (1018-1054 A.D.)
Vikrama Chola, (1118-1120.)
Raja Raja II, (1146-1163.)

PANDYA : Maranjadaiyan.
Maravarman.
Sundarapandya.
Jatavarman Sundarapandya.

VIJAYANAGAR : Thirumalaideva and Virupaksha.

VILLAGE : The village is called Thirukkattuppalli in Arkkattu Kurram in Eyilnadu in Pandikulasanivalanadu.

THE DEITY : The main deity is called Thirukkattuppalli Udaiyar.

STRUCTURES : The main temple seems to have undergone extensive repairs during the centuries. An inscription of Vijayanagara ruler Virupaksha refers to repairs to the temple. In the seventh year of Maravarman Sundarapandya the shrine of the Goddess was built.

GIFTS ETC.

In the sixth year of Raja Raja a gift of land is recorded to the God Thiruviranisvarattu Mahadeva. A thirty-fifth year inscription of Rajadhi Raja I records gift of lands to Ayirattal Mahadeva of Thirukkattuppalli. An inscription dated in the eleventh year of Pandya Maranjadaiyan refers to a gift of lamp for Aiyirattali Mahadeva of Niyamam by Sattankali, daughter of Videlvidugu Muttaraiyar. An epigraph of Raja Raja II refers to Kailasamudaiya Mahadeva.

SENDALAI

H/O MANNAR SAMUDRAM

Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

Sendalai is a small village about three kilometres east of Tirukattuppalli, on the road to Kandiyur and it is situated on the southern bank of the river Kudamurutti, a branch of the Cauvery. Budalur is the nearest railway station about thirteen kilometres from Sendalai. The village was known in the past as Chandralekhai, Chaturvedimangalam and

Thirupperundurai. The population of this village is 2,211 according to 1961 Census.

Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple in the village is an old one. According to the inscriptions on the temple walls, it was known in the past as the temple of Lord Mahadeva of Perundurai which once formed part of Arcottukkurram and again formed part of Pandya Kulasam Valanadu during the Chola hegemony.

The temple is very rich in inscriptions. There are about forty inscriptions on the walls of this temple covering the period of nearly 500 years from the latter part of the Eighth Century A.D. (Circa 781 A.D,) to the Eighteenth Century (1265 A.D.).

The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is known as Sri Meenakshisundareswarar and the Goddess as Sri Meenakshi Amman.

The magnificent Rajagopuram, about seventy feet tall, with seven tiers, is at the entrance to this temple. The artistic images on the gopuram reveal exquisite workmanship. There are two prakarams. The sanctum sanctorum and the sanctum of Goddess are built of massive stones and adorned with beautiful sculptural work. The temple occupies about 1·55 acres of land. There are a number of festival deities, each having a separate shrine. Four poojas are daily performed.

The temple owns some antique and modern jewels worth about Rs. 3,000. It has got 14·99 acres of wet lands and 34·08 acres of dry lands. The annual income is about Rs. 6,000. Wooden mounts such as car, two palanquins, rishabam, peacock, swan and Nandhi are available here and they are used during festivals. The workmanship of the rishaba vahana is praise-worthy. Brahmothsavam is celebrated in the month of Vaikasi for ten days and this is an important festival.

There is a legend that once Lord Brahma prayed to the Lord of this place. The earliest name of the deity of this

Sri Valanchuli Vinayagar
Sri Odhavaneswarar Temple
Tiruchotruthurai.

temple is Lord Mahadeva of Tirupperundurai. We know that this is the place where Saint Manickavasagar attained his enlightenment and spiritual beatitude. It is not known whether this place was in any way connected with the life of this Saint. "Vagai" Tree is the Sthala Viruksham of this temple.

An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the affairs of this temple.

THIRUCHCHOTRUTHURAI.

Sri Odhavaneswaraswamy Temple

This temple is situated in Thiruchchotruthurai, about eight kilometres from Pasupathikoil railway station. It is said that it was built by Chola Kings about 1,000 years ago. The temple faces east, having inner and outer prakarams. There is a separate sanctum for the divine consort. The temple occupies about 1·50 acres of land. The population of this place is 1,927 according to 1961 Census.

This sthalam is the third among the Saptha Sthalams and thirteenth among 127 Siva sthalams situated on the southern bank of the Cauvery. At the time of a great famine, sage Gouthama is said to have fed a number of Saivite devotees and saved their lives. Hence the place is also known as Gouthamasramam.

On the southern bank of the temple is running a small rivulet popularly called "Sorudaiyan" which is said to have been created by sage Gouthama to quench the thirst of the Saivite devotees whom he fed.

The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is called Tholaiya Selvar and the divine consort Oppila Ammai. They are also named as Odhavaneswarar and Annapoorani respectively. Saints Appar, Sambandhar, and Sundarar have sung hymns. The Thevaram refers to the place as "**துறந்தார் சேரும் சோற்றுத் துறை.**"

This temple owns 4·26 acres of wet and 15·23 acres of dry lands. About Rs. 4,000 is the annual income of this temple. Four poojas are daily performed. There are some antique jewels here. The Saptha Sthalam festival during the month of Chithrai is an important one.

An Executive Officer and a single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the administration of this temple.

TIRUVEDIKUDI

Sri Vedhapureeswaraswamy Temple

This temple is situated in Tiruvedikudi village about eight kilometres from Thanjavur railway Station. This is the fourth among Sapthasthalams and fourteenth among the sthalams situated on the southern bank of Cauvery. The temple has a gopuram and a single prakaram, occupying fairly a big area of 2,00 acres of land. The population of the small village is 936 according to 1961 Census.

This is one of the holy places worshipped by the Vedhas. Hence, the name Vedikudi. Vinayagar here, is called Vedha Vinayagar. The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is called Vedhapureeswarar and the divine consort, Mangayarkarasi or Vedhanayagi. Vazhai Madu Nathar is the other name for the presiding deity here. The idol of the Vedha Vinayagar is slightly inclined as if He is listening to the Vedhas keenly. Saints Appar and Sambandhar have sung hymns about this shrine.

The temple owns about 39·32 acres of wet and dry lands. The income derived out of these lands is spent for performing daily poojas and conducting the annual festival. The annual festival falls on one day in the month of Chithirai. In the month of Panguni, on the thirteenth and fourteenth, the Sun's rays fall on the Lingam, the presiding deity, which signifies the Sun's worship of the Lord.

A single Trustee is managing the temple, which comes under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KANDIYUR

Sri Brahma Sirakandeeswaraswamy And Sri Harasaba Vimochana Perumal Temple

Kandiyur is situated at a distance of ten kilometres from Thanjavur, on the Thanjavur—Thiruvaiyaru bus route. The nearest railway station is Thanjavur. The population of this place according to 1961 Census is 3,233. Sri Brahmasirakandeeswaraswamy Temple is the famous Saivite temple of this place. It is popularly known as the first among the "Ashta Veerattams". There is also a Vaishnavite temple dedicated to Sri Harasaba Vimochana Perumal.

The Siva temple enshrines Brahma Sirakandeeswara (Iswara who plucked one of the heads of Brahma). In the Vaishnavite temple, Lord Vishnu is worshipped under the name "Harasaba Vimochana Perumal" the Lord who expiated Siva's sin due to the removal of one of the heads of Brahma.

A number of inscriptions belonging to the Chola period have been found in the Siva temple. One of the inscriptions relates to the appointment of a dance master. This temple is mentioned in the Periapuranam.

Brahmasirakandeeswarar Temple occupies roughly an area of one acre and faces westwards. There is an imposing Rajagopuram of five tiers with plaster figures of Lingodhbhavar, Dwarapalakar and Vinayagar on the front side. There are two prakarams (Corridors) and a beautiful Nandhavanam (Flower Garden) here. Bali Peedam, Dwajasthambam and the Amman temple are located in the second prakaram while the various sub-deities are located in the first prakaram. There is a separate sanctum for Kaliamman on the southern side of the first prakaram.

The presiding deity is Sri Brahmasirakandeeswarar a Swayambu Lingam, and His consort is known as Sri Mangalambigai. The important festival idols in the temple are Somaskandhar, Chandrasekharar and Natarajar of which the idol of Sri Natarajar bears exquisite workmanship. In this temple, Brahma with His consort Saraswathi is seen worshipping the Lord. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this temple and sung hymns in praise of the Lord. Thirugnanasambandhar has mentioned about the Lord's punishment to Brahma (Plucking one of his heads) in a hymn. Appar has sung about the greatness of this sthalam. It is said that Saint Arunagirinathar has also sung about the importance of this place.

Four poojas are done in the temple. The temple possesses antique jewels worth Rs. 4,000. There are about 143 acres of both wet and dry lands belonging to the temple which have been leased out and income derived amounting to Rs. 12,000 per annum, is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple besides conduct of periodical festivals.

Brahmothsavam, for a period of ten days during Vaikasi Visakham, is the only important festival celebrated by the temple, which attracts about a thousand devotees from the neighbouring villages.

Sri Harasabha Vimochana Perumal Temple

This is smaller than the Siva temple, covering an area of about sixty cents. The Moolavar Sri Harasabha Vimochana Perumal is in a standing posture and His consort is known as Kamalavalli Thayar. Sri Brigunatha Perumal and Balinatha Perumal are the other names of the Lord. The uthsavar is popularly known as Sri Kamala Nathar. Saint Thirumangai Alwar has sung in praise of this Lord.

There are two prakarams and a Rajagopuram. On the southern side of the first prakaram, the idols of the various Alwars and Desigar have been installed. On the western side of the first prakaram, the sanctum of Sri Andal is located.

Saint Appar
Sri Pushpavaneswarar Temple
Melathirupoonthuruthi.

There is a separate sanctum for Goddess Komalavalli Thayar. The images of Sri Chakkarath Alwar and Sri Narasimhamurthy have been carved on a single stone, in the front and rear respectively.

Four poojas are done every day. The temple owns jewels worth about Rs. 6,000 which are all antique. There are also about one seventy-five acres of both wet and dry lands belonging to the temple and the income amounting to Rs. 6,000 per year derived from these lands is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple, besides conduct of the periodical festivals. There are also several wooden vahanas which are used to mount the God during festivals. The Brahmothsavam celebrated in the Tamil month of Panguni is said to be very important.

Both these temples are managed by one and the same Executive Officer, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department, while there are two Trustees,-one for each of these two temples.

MELATHIRUPPOONTHURUTHI

Sri Pushpavaneswaraswamy Temple

This temple is situated about fifteen kilometres from Thanjavur. It has a Rajagopuram, about hundred feet tall. There is another gopuram about fifty feet high inside the temple. The temple faces east, occupying fairly a big area of about 2·19 acres of land. There are two prakarams. The presiding deity, a Swayambu Lingam, is called Sri Pushpavaneswarar and the divine consort, Sri Soundara Nayagi. The Goddess is located in a separate sanctum. Melathiruppoonthuruthi is a Panchayat having a population of 6,823 according to 1961 Census.

It is understood that this temple was built by Chola Kings. This is the eleventh sthalam among the one hundred and

twenty-seven sthalams situated on the southern bank of the Cauvery in Chola Nadu and the sixth sthalam among the Saptha Sthalams.

Saint Appar was living in a Mutt near the temple for long. The Mutt has been renovated and is in a good condition now. The Saint was worshipping the presiding deity with great devotion. The story goes that when the young Saint Thirugnanasambandhar visited this place to see Appar, He could not find him. When Sambandhar enquired where he could meet Appar, Appar came from among the palanquin bearers and the two great saints hugged each other in great joy. According to another story, the Nandhi in the temple moved away a little to enable Thirugnanasambandhar to have a good darshan of the Lord.

The temple owns about 37·65 acres of wet lands, 22·17 acres of dry lands and 12·91 acres of garden lands. The annual income of this temple is about Rs. 10,000. Four poojas are performed daily. Some antique jewels made of gold and silver are to be seen in this temple.

Saptha Sthalam festival during Chithirai month is an important one. About 10,000 persons participate in this festival.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and two Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUKKANURPATTI

Sri Karumbeswarar Temple

Thirukkanurpatti is situated at a distance of twelve kilometres north of Budalur railway station on the southern bank of the Coleroon river. From Budalur, buses ply upto Vishnampettai. From Vishnampettai to the place where the temple is situated, there is a cart track. This village has a population of 1,609 according to 1961 Census. The temple

is located in the midst of garden lands and is surrounded by mounds and Palmyrah Trees. It is said that on account of heavy floods in the Coleroon, the entire area was eroded and the residents of the locality have all shifted to the nearby village Vishnampettai. Except for the temple, the area around the temple is uninhabited.

The temple is said to be an ancient one. There are remnants of the old compound wall built of brick and mortar. The sanctum sanctorum of the Lord and the sanctum of the Goddess and the front Gopuram are intact. The presiding deity Sri Semmeni Nathar is facing south and His divine consort Sri Sivayoga Nayagi is facing south in a separate sanctum on the north-eastern corner. The presiding deity is also known as Sri Itshuvaneswarar and Sri Karumbeswarar, while the Goddess is known as Soundaranayagi. The old gopuram in front of the temple has got three tiers and the temple has a single prakaram. On the western side of the prakaram the sub-deities Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Chandikeswarar are installed and the images of Bairavar, Navagrahas and Nandhi are located on the eastern side of the prakaram.

This is one of the 274 "Padal Petra Sthalams". Saints Appar and Gnanasambandhar have visited this shrine and sung hymns in praise of the Lord.

There are also inscriptions on the outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum. They relate to the period of Chola and Pandya Kings. Some fish-like carvings are found on the top of the pillars, which would indicate that they must have been made during the time of Pandyas. Also some snake-like carvings are found on the front side of the gopuram.

Two poojas are performed every day. The sanctum sanctorum has been so designed that on two or three days during April every year, the rays of the Sun fall on the Moolavar Lingam, which is said to signify the pooja offered by the Sun-God.

The temple owns 20·70 acres of wet and 63·70 acres of dry lands, through which an annual income of Rs. 6,800 is

derived. The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and the Trustees appointed by them are directly managing the affairs of the temple.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

Thanjavur Taluk has a number of towns and villages with ancient temples constructed by the Chola Kings. Quite a number of these temples have been dealt with in detail. There are a few more, about which a brief account is given below.

Perumpuliyur at a distance of sixteen kilometres from Thanjavur is an important Vaishnavite centre, where the ancient temple dedicated to Sri Sundararaja Perumal stands. It is said that Saint Thirumazhisai Alwar had visited this shrine and worshipped the Lord. Legend has it that Sri Sundararaja Perumal who was originally facing eastwards turned westwards in order to give darshan to Thirumazhisai Alwar. There is also a Siva temple in this place dedicated to Sri Vyagrapureeswarar. This temple contains several inscriptions relating to Raja Raja Chola's period which throw light on the various endowments made to the temple. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine and sung in praise of the Lord.

Thiruneithanam is a place sixteen kilometres from Thanjavur on the bus route from Thanjavur to Grand Anicut. Sri Kridhapureeswaraswamy Temple in this place is an ancient temple, probably built during the Chola period. This temple has two prakarams and a Rajagopuram of 75 feet high with plaster figures. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have visited this shrine and sung hymns in praise of the Lord. The important festival in this temple is 'Saptha Sthanam' conducted in the Tamil month of Chithirai when the deity is taken in a procession to Thiruvaiyaru.

Vanarangudi at a distance of thirty-two kilometres from Thanjavur contains a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Naganatha-

swamy built by Chola Kings. This temple also contains several inscriptions. The Goddess is known as Nagambigai. There is a belief that the God and Goddess of this temple always come to the rescue of their devotees if their prayers are genuine. Thogur situated about forty-eight kilometres to the west of Thanjavur on the Tiruchi-Thanjavur border contains a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Meenakshi-Sundareswarar. This is said to have been constructed by some philanthropic villagers about hundred years ago. Nadukaveri situated at a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Thanjavur on the Thanjavur-Agarapettai bus route, contains a Siva temple and a Perumal temple both managed by a single Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. Both these temples are ancient. A Rajagopuram has been newly constructed for the Siva Temple. Sri Haribrahmeswarar is the presiding deity in the Siva temple while the presiding deity in the Perumal temple, is known as Sri Lakshminarayana Perumal. Sri Lakshminarayana Perumal is found in a sitting posture with Goddess Lakshmi Devi.

Sri Kailasanathaswamy's shrine in Thingalur is an ancient and important Sivasthalam also known for the greatness of the Lord. Saint Appar had visited this shrine and composed a verse. The greatness of the Lord is revealed by the following legend. There lived a pious man by name *Appoothi Adigal* in this village who was a keen devotee of Lord Siva. One day his son succumbed to a snake bite. On hearing this, Saint Thirunavukkarasar placed the dead body of Appoothi Adigal's son in front of Sri Kailasanathaswamy Temple and sung as follows

ஒன்றுகொ லாமவர் சிந்தை யுயர்வரை
ஒன்றுகொ லாமுய ரும்மதி சூடுவர்
ஒன்றுகொ லாமிடு வெண்டலை கையது
ஒன்றுகொ லாமவர் ஊர்வது தானே.

His prayers were fulfilled and the boy got up as if he was waking from sleep. It is even now believed that victims of snake bite are saved if they are taken to this temple.

Thiruchadeswara Swamy's Temple in Pudukudi (North) was built during the Chola period. It contains several inscriptions.

Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy Temple in Kovilpathu and Sri Ekambareswaraswamy Temple in Vallamperambur were constructed by king Parantaka Chola and contain several interesting inscriptions. There are two shrines in Venkatasamudram dedicated to Sri Kailasanathaswamy and Sri Vathalai Nachiamman. The latter shrine is said to be very powerful and people from nearby villages come and worship this Goddess with great devotion. Sri Adhinayagaswamy Temple in Nodiyur also contains several inscriptions relating to Chola period.

ORATHANAD TALUK

KOVILUR

Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy Temple

Situated in the heart of Kovilur, a village about fifty kilometres from Orathanad, the temple of Sri Abathsahayeswarar with its massive walls, huge gopuram and artistic vimanam is bound to attract even a casual visitor to the village. The place is linked with several sacred centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Thanjavur at a distance of about twenty-six kilometres. It is a Panchayat having a population of 3,379 (1,687 males and 1,692 females) according to the 1961 Census. Because of this sacred shrine, the village is a place of pilgrimage.

The temple which faces east has a single prakaram, two sancta and several mandapams. It is situated on a land of about one acre. The presiding deity is Sri Abathsahayeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. The shrine of the divine consort, Amaravathi Amman faces west. The eastern and southern gateways of the temple are crowned by two small gopurams. In the Alankara Mandapam, there are twenty-four beautifully carved stone pillars. It is said that this shrine was built some 150 years ago by the Zamindar Palaya Bhattar of Gandharvakottai.

Poojas are performed twice daily. The ancient jewels of the temple in gold and silver are worth about Rs. 500, all donated by the Zamindar of Gandharvakottai. The landed properties of the temple comprise of 443·73 acres of both

wet and dry lands apart from 3·15 acres of Iluppai Thope which fetch an annual income of Rs. 3,100 by way of rent. This sum is utilised for the upkeep and general maintenance of the temple. Karthigai Deepam is the famous festival celebrated with great eclat and witnessed by thousands of devotees from far and near.

There is a popular legend relating to the origin of this shrine which runs thus:

Once upon a time this place was a thick forest. One day a passer-by, an ardent devotee of Lord Siva who was chased by a tiger came to this place and saw a Swayambu Lingam here. At once he embraced it with great joy and prayed to the Lord to save him from the tiger and the Lord saved him. From that day onwards, the Lord came to be called Abathsahayeswarar (i.e,. one who protects His devotees when they are in danger). A beautiful shrine for Him came into existence soon.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

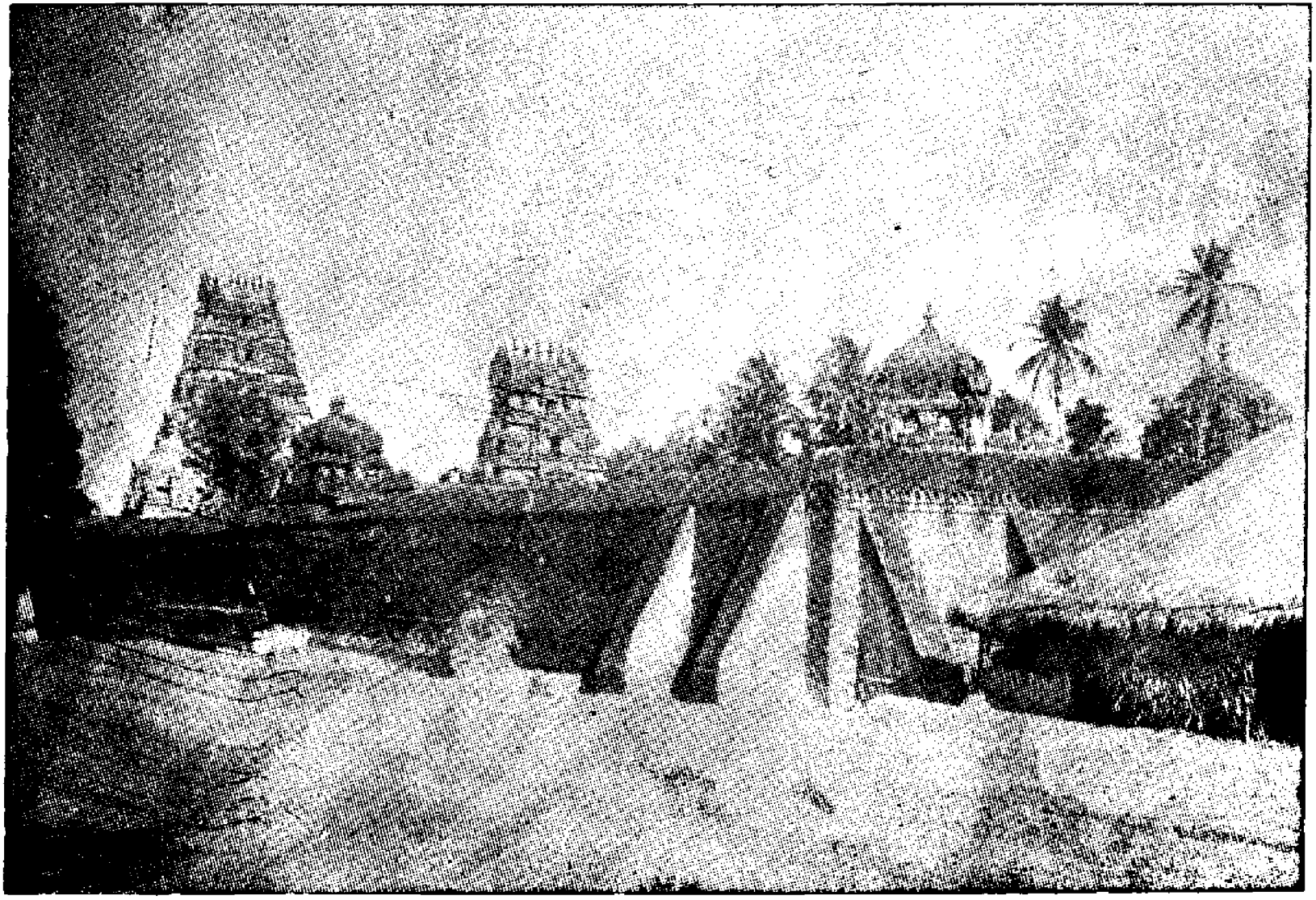
PARUTHIAPPARKOIL.

H/O KEELA ULUR.

Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy Temple

Situated centrally in Paruthiapparkoil, a hamlet of Keela Ulur, the ancient temple of Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy with its lofty tower in the front presents an inspiring view. This ancient shrine is steeped in rich legendary lore.

The village Keela Ulur lies on the Thanjavur-Pattukkottai road and is easily accessible. It is served by both bus and train, the nearest railway station being Thanjavur at a



Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy Temple Gopuram and Vimanam
Paruthiapparkovil.

distance of about nineteen kilometres. It is a small Panchayat having a population of 1,574 (769 males and 805 females) according to the 1961 Census.

The ancient temple which faces east has two prakarams and two sancta. There are several interesting stone inscriptions here on the inner walls of the temple which are very informative. The temple covers an area of about 0·93 acre. The presiding deity is Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The shrine of the divine consort Mangalanayagi faces east. There are separate sancta here for Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Mahalakshmi, Durgai, Chandikeswarar, Saneeswarar, Natarajar and Dakshinamurthy. There are also several festival deities. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is that on the nineteenth day in the Tamil month of Panguni (March-April) every year, the rays of the Sun directly fall on the Lingam. There are three idols of Chandikeswarar.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 600, all donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple fetch an annual income of about Rs. 14,700 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. There is an ancient car (Ther) and a ratham, both made of wood.

Panguni Uthiram, Chithira Pournami, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Navarathri, Deepavali, Thiruvadhirai, Thai Poosam, Masi Magham and Ani Thirumanjanam are the regular annual festivals celebrated here, of which the Panguni Uthiram is the most important one, when a large crowd of about 20,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

There is an interesting anecdote regarding the origin of this shrine. It is said that once one of the attendants of the famous King Sibi Chakravarthi while removing the shrubs here accidentally hit a hidden Lingam with his axe and found blood spurting out. Immediately he reported this fact to the king who erected a beautiful temple installing the Lingam. It is

said that Lord Brahma and His consort and several kings and devotees had worshipped the Lord and attained eternal bliss.

The affairs of the temple are administered by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

MUKTHAMBALPURAM

H/O. ORATHANAD

Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy Temple

Situated centrally in Mukthambalpuram, now popularly called Orathanad, a place about 22 kilometres from Thanjavur, the temple of Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy with its beautiful pagodas and artistic vimanams is popular in the region.

The village Mukthambalpuram lies on the Thanjavur-Pattukkottai road and is easily accessible. Buses are plying frequently from Thanjavur, Pattukkottai and other centres to this place. It is also served by train, the nearest railway station being Thanjavur at a distance of about 22 kilometres. Orathanad is a city Panchayat having a population of 7,152 (3,889 males and 3,263 females) according to the 1961 Census.

The temple which faces east has a 35 feet high gopuram, two large prakarams and two sancta. There are several artistically carved stone pillars in the various mandapams of the temple. This ancient shrine is said to have been built by the famous king of Thanjavur, Sri Sarfoji. Subsequently several additions and alterations were made by the village people and a Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1889. The presiding deity of the temple, Sri Kasi Viswanathar is an installed Lingam here. The shrine of the divine consort Sri Visalakshmi Amman faces west. Sri Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Dakshinamurthy, and Chandikeswarar are the sub-deities here. The festival idols of the God and Goddess are very arresting.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 2,000 all donated by King Sarfoji. Of these, the silver Kavacham and Nagabaranam of the Lord deserve special mention. The landed properties of the above temple comprise about five acres of both wet and dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 2,400, by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The temple owns an ancient Ther (Car) and a palanquin made of wood. Of the several festivals celebrated here, the Vaikasi Visakam (May-June) is the most important one, when a large concourse of devotees from the neighbouring villages and taluks congregate here.

An Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are in charge of the temple.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

A brief account of other temples in the taluk is given below :

About eleven kilometres from Thanjavur is Kasanadu Koilur, a hamlet of Kattukurichi Panchayat where an ancient Saivite shrine dedicated to Sri Jambukeswarar exists. It is said that Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had visited this shrine. There is a beautiful image of Sri Sambandhar inside the temple. There are also several interesting stone inscriptions here. Sadayarkoil, a hamlet of Raghavambalpuram village which is at a distance of eight kilometres from Saliyamangalam railway station is noted for its one thousand year old Siva temple dedicated to Sri Vaninathar who is an installed Lingam. This ancient shrine is said to have been built during the period of the famous Chola rulers. Adjacent to this village lies Moorthambalpuram where a famous Vaishnavite shrine dedicated to Sri Lakshminarayana

Perumal stands. The temple was constructed by the famous King Sri Vijaya Chockalinga Nayak. The Vaikunta Ekadhasi festival is celebrated with great eclat every year.

Thekkur on the Orathanad-Kottaithur bus route has the Siva temple of Agastheeswarar. Legend has it that Sage Agasthya had installed the Lingam here and offered worship. Thiruvadhirai festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm. The ancient Thirumeninathaswamy Temple of Thiruvonam is said to have been built by the reputed King Rajendra Chola. There are several interesting stone inscriptions in the Amman Sannadhi which are very informative.

Situated on the Pattukkottai-Pudukottai road, the village of Thaligaividuthi has the famous Siva temple of Sri Thiruppanangadudaiyar. His divine consort Anandavalli Ambal is noted for Her powers especially in curing chronic diseases of Her devotees. A large number of devotees visit this shrine for worship on the Visakam day, in the Tamil month of Vaikasi (May-June).

MANNARGUDI TALUK

NEEDAMANGALAM

1. Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy Temple

This temple is situated on the southern bank of Vennar river and is about one kilometre from Needamangalam railway station. The population of this village is about 4,896. The village was previously known as Yamunambalpuram after the name of the Maharashtrian Queen who ruled over the region.

King Pratapsingh who was a Siva devotee built this temple. As his wife was worshipping Lord Santhana Raman and got a child, he built Sri Santhana Ramaswamy Temple. Both these temples are under one management.

This is a small but beautiful temple. There is a three tier gopuram on the southern side. There are separate shrines for Sun, Saneeswarar, Vinayagar, Murugar, Saraswathi, Gajalakshmi and Navagrahas.

Sri Kasi Viswanathar, a Swayambu Lingam, is the presiding deity and Sri Kasi Visalakshi is the divine consort in this temple. The Goddess's shrine faces south. The plinth area of this temple is about 37,442 sq. ft. (0·86 acres). Somaskandhar, Chandrasekharar, Prathosha Murthy, Vinayagar, Lord Muruga with His divine consorts Valli and Deivayanai and Amman are the festival deities kept in the Mahamandapam.

The idols of the shrine are noted for their artistic finish. On a pillar in the Goddess's Mandapam the image of Lord

Vinayagar has been neatly carved. The elephants on either side of the Sannadhi of Gajalakshmi reveal good workmanship.

The mounts (vahanas) in this temple are also beautiful. This temple is so designed that one can have darshan of the Lord and Amman from outside. There are silver Kavachams for Vinayagar, the presiding deity and the Goddess.

Six poojas are daily performed. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated in the month of Vaikasi. Vaikasi Visakam, Ani Thirumanjanam, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Deepam and Thai Poosam are the other festivals celebrated every year.

There is an interesting legend about this temple. When this temple was at the finishing stage, King Pratapsingh prayed to Lord Siva to provide him with a Bana Lingam for installation in this temple. At that time, a Saint from North India gave a Bana Lingam stating that he found this in the River Narmadha. The King with overwhelming joy installed this Lingam and performed Kumbabishegam.

The annual income of Sri Santhana Ramaswamy Temple is utilised for this temple. It owns some modern jewels worth about Rs. 10,000. The Executive Officer and the three Trustees of Sri Santhana Ramaswamy Temple are managing this Temple also.

2. Sri Santhana Ramaswamy Temple

This temple centrally situated in Needamangalam presents, a picturesque appearance with the holy tank in the foreground. Rivers Vennar on the north and Koraiyar on the west run like a garland on either side of this place. Needamangalam railway station is on the Thanjavur—Thiruvarur route about thirty kilometres from Thanjavur and twenty-five kilometres

from Thiruvarur. This temple was built by King Pratapsingh in 1761. The population of this village is about 4,896 persons.

The temple is facing east. There is no gopuram over the front gate. Inside the temple, there is a beautiful mandapam depicting Ramayanam in 108 colour pictures. The Dasavatharam scenes are painted in the Vasantha Mandapam. There is a three tier Gopuram inside the temple. On the eastern side of the inner prakaram, Dwajasthambam and Yagasala are situated.

The presiding deity, Sri Santhana Ramaswamy with Sita and Lakshmanar is in standing posture in the sanctum sanctorum. The artistic festival deities of Santhanaramar, Sita, Lakshmanar, Hanumar and Sayana Santhana Krishnar are in front of the presiding deity. There are two prakarams inside this temple and one path for hauling the car outside the temple. This Vaishnavite temple is following Vadakalai customs.

King Pratapsingh arranged an endowment in his wife's name and built a choultry called Yamunambal Choultry in 1761. This choultry is full of fine arcades and domes. When it was renovated in 1897, some underground rooms were found in this place. Deities used to halt here for sometime during festival times.

This place is famous for Murthy, Sthalam and Theertham. Thers is no separate sanctum for the Goddess. There is a a belief that one who has a holy dip in Saketha Theertham in front of this temple and worships this Lord will have children. The temple had its Kumbabishegam in 1924.

Six poojas are performed daily by a Vaishnavite Archakar. This temple occupies about 1·02 acres of land. There are some modern jewels like diamond 'Pathakkam' and 'Manga Malai' worth about Rs. 53,000. It owns about 160·82 acres of wet lands, 6·50 acres of dry lands and seventeen houses. The annual income out of these properties amounts to Rs. 45,000. There are some silver and wooden mounts

which will be used during festival times. Sri Rama Navami, the annual Brahmothsavam of this temple is celebrated during Panguni month for ten days. Krishna Jayanthi, Navarathri, Adi Pooram, Vaikunta Ekadhasi etc., are the other festivals celebrated here.

As King Pratapsingh had no heirs to the throne, his wife Yamunambal prayed to Lord Sri Santhana Raman and got a son. As a token of His gratitude, the King built Sri Santhana Ramaswamy Temple and a Siva temple there. He endowed 150 veli lands to these temples and named this place after his wife. The place is, therefore, referred to as Yamunambalpuram. Further for the sake of his wife he had also built Sri Kothandaramaswamy Temple and Sri Kailasanathar Temple in Yamunambalpettai near Sri Mariamman Temple in Thanjavur.

An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing this temple.

MULLAVASAL

H/O PERAMBUR

Sri Mullavaneswarar Temple

Situated on the bank of River Korayar, this temple is about four kilometres south-east of Needamangalam railway station. Thanjavur, the District Headquarters is about 35 kilometres and Mannargudi, the Taluk Headquarters is about 8 kilometres from this place. A narrow mud road along the eastern bank of the river Korayar leads to this village. The total population of this village is 1,320.

Sri Mullavaneswarar, a Swayambu Lingam, is the presiding deity of this temple. The divine consort is called Sri Karpagavalli Amman. It is believed that this shrine was built over two hundred years ago. Kumbabishegams were performed once in 1901 and again in 1942.

The temple covers an area of about 3·46 acres of land. There is only one prakaram. Poojas are performed four times daily. There are some modern gold jewels and silver Kavachams for Ganesar, Murugar with His two consorts and Karpagavalli Amman, mostly made out of the annual income of this temple.

The landed properties of about 55·48 acres of wet and 1·73 acres of dry lands belonging to this temple are being let out on lease and the annual income derived out of this is about Rs. 7,000. This income is utilised for the upkeep and maintenance of this temple.

The sacred immersion of the presiding deity in the tank opposite to the temple on the last Sunday, in the month of Karthigai is celebrated as an important festival in this temple. Devotees believe that by taking bath on all Sundays of Karthigai month their skin diseases, if any, will be got ridden. Visakam, Thirumanjanam, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Arudhra Darshan and Sivarathri are the other festivals celebrated during a year.

There are some inscriptions on the southern and western walls of the Garbha Graham which may interest scholars. There is also one "Sarabam inscription" (சரபம் கல்வெட்டு) on the northern exterior of the Garbha Graham wall, opposite to Sri Chandikesar shrine.

There is no Executive Officer for this temple. Under Section 54 (1) of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act of 1959, the descendants of the founders of this temple are managing this temple.

POOVANUR

Sri Chathuranga Vallabanathaswamy Temple

This temple is located at Poovanur, a village about ten kilometres from Mannargudi. Poovanur is one of the important Saivite shrines of Chola Nad. It has a popu-

lation of 1,767. The temple with its sacred tank and lofty tower seems to heighten the greatness of this sthalam. This old temple occupies an area of about an acre. About seventy years back, the temple was renovated due to the efforts of a devotee.

The presiding deity is Chathuranga Vallabanathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam. The sanctum sanctorum faces east. There are two prakarams in the temple. Two shrines have been built for the Goddess. In one She is known as Karpagavalli and in the other as Rajarajeswari.

There is a separate shrine for Sri Chamundeeswari facing north opposite to the Swami sannadhi. This deity is considered powerful. On every Sunday, one can witness an interesting sight here. People suffering from the bite of rats and bandicoots come to the Goddess seeking relief. A piece of root of a plant is tied on the suffering people in the presence of the Goddess, which is believed to give the desired relief.

The temple has attracted the poetic piety of Saint Appar. Poojas are performed six times a day in this temple. There are some gold jewels and silver Kavachams worth about Rs. 11,000. The temple owns about 174·21 acres of wet lands, 37·92 acres of dry lands and ten houses. The annual income derived out of the above properties comes to about Rs. 33,000. There are some wooden mounts like elephant, peacock, horse, lion, swan, nandhi, rishabam etc., which are used during festival times. There are silver Kavachams for the presiding deity and the festival deities.

A ten-day festival in honour of Chamundeeswari is celebrated in the month of Chithirai. The Brahmothsavam, is celebrated for ten days in the temple in Vaikasi month. Before commencing the Brahmothsavam, a preliminary festival in honour of the village deities Ayyanar, Viran and Kathavarayan are celebrated. These village Gods have separate shrines in the village. There are also small temples for Sri Kailasanathar, Angalamman, Kaliamman and Anjaneyar in the village.

Pampani River, Ksheera Pushkarani and Krishna Kushtabara Theertham are the theerthams here where pious devotees take bath. Jack Tree is the "Sthala Viruksham" of the temple. An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

Legend has it that King Vasusenan of Pandya Nad who was living at Thirunelveli was childless. He and his wife Santhimathi were great devotees of Siva. Once when the King and the Queen were bathing in the Tambaraparani, they found a conch in a lotus flower (Thamarai). When the King took the conch, he found a female child which he joyously gave to his wife. The jubilant couple named her Raja-Rajeswari. As ordained by the Lord, Chamundi, one of the Saptha Kannigais nursed the child. Raja Rajeswari when she grew up was good at playing dice or chathurangam. When the girl came of age, the King announced that he who wins in a game of dice with his daughter could marry her. When none came forward, the King was worried. At that time a sage came and advised the King to go on a pilgrimage with his daughter. When they reached this place, Lord Siva in the disguise of a Siddhar met them and He gave them to understand that He was an expert in playing Chathurangam. The Siddhar played the game of dice with Raja Rajeswari and won. When the King enquired about the Siddhar's background, the latter said he had no name, no form and belonged to no caste. When the King was perplexed, Lord Siva gave darshan to the King and others. The King and his consort performed here the marriage of Lord Siva and Raja Rajeswari. The place was thus sanctified. Hence the Lord of this place is known as Sri Chathuranga Vallabanathar.

VADUVUR AGRAHARAM

Sri Kothandaramaswamy Temple

One of the ancient shrines dedicated to Sri Rama is that of Sri Kothandaramaswamy at Vaduvur. It is situated at a

village twenty-four kilometres from Thanjavur on the Thanjavur—Mannargudi bus route. It is linked with neighbouring towns by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Ammapettai at a distance of about eleven kilometres. Vaduvur Agraharam is a Panchayat with a population of 2,139 persons.

The tiny shrine which covers an area of about forty-two cents presents an inspiring view. There are four prakarams and two sancta here. The presiding diety of the temple, Sri Kothandaramaswamy is represented by a five feet high granite vigraham. His festival idol which is a happy blend of art, simplicity and beauty conforms in almost every detail to the description of Sri Rama in the epic. There are also several other festival deities here.

Poojas are performed six times daily. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamond worth about Rs. 61,000 mostly donated by devotees. Of these, the golden Kasumalai, Mango Necklace and the costly stone studded diamond Thilakam deserve special mention. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about fifty-four acres of both wet and dry lands apart from a building which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 11,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 200 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 100 per annum. The temple owns a Ther (Car), a silver palanquin, a copper plated palanquin and as many as seven old vahanas, viz., garuda, sesha, Hanumar, horse, elephant, swan and Surya-Prabhai, all made of wood.

Of the several festivals celebrated here, the Panguni Brahmothsavam and the *Ra pathu* festival in Margazhi, are the major ones. The Brahmothsavam is celebrated for nine days from Sri Ramanavami day in April. The sixth day of the festival is the most important. In the morning, the deity is carried in a palanquin to all the important streets and the pious people of the village vie with one another in decorating

their door steps and receiving the deity with all honours. At night after the procession of the deities on an elephant vahanam through the four main streets round the temple, the Divine Wedding at the entrance of the temple is witnessed by a large concourse of devotees from the nearby towns and villages.

'*Laksharchanai*' is an annual feature in this temple and on the concluding day music recitals and religious discourses by eminent artists and exponents are arranged.

This sacred place is known as Vagularanyam and Dakshina Ayodhi. It is said that this shrine was formerly dedicated to Sri Gopalan and Sri Kothandaramaswamy became the presiding deity under strange circumstances. Legend has it that the idols of Sri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Hanuman lay buried under a tree in Thalainayar, a village near Thiruthuraipoondi. This fact was revealed in a dream to the then Raja of Thanjavur. He took immediate steps for the excavation. The idols of Sri Rama, Sita and Hanuman which were obtained first were sent to Thanjavur. While search for the other idols was being made, the people of the village woke up suddenly and objected to the idols being taken away to Thanjavur. As a compromise, the Raja gave the idols of Lakshmana and Bharatha to the people of Thalainayar and returned hastily to join the advance party proceeding to Thanjavur via., Vaduvur with the idols of the divine couple and Hanuman. On the way, attracted by the idols of legendary beauty, the people of Vaduvur requested the Raja to give the idols to them for installation in the village temple. They climbed up the temple tower and said that they would fall down and put an end to their lives if the Raja did not comply with their request. Moved by their unstinted devotion, the kind hearted king not only gave the idols to them but also helped in the renovation of the temple tower which had been left unfinished for a long time. An idol of Lakshmana was later cast and the royal 'trio' with Anjaneyar took their abode in Vaduvur. Sri Gopalan has a separate sanctum in the temple today.

Devotees from far and near visit the temple throughout the year attracted by the beautiful idol of the presiding deity, Vaduvur Sri Kothandaramaswamy whose radiant smile seems to afford solace.

MANNARGUDI

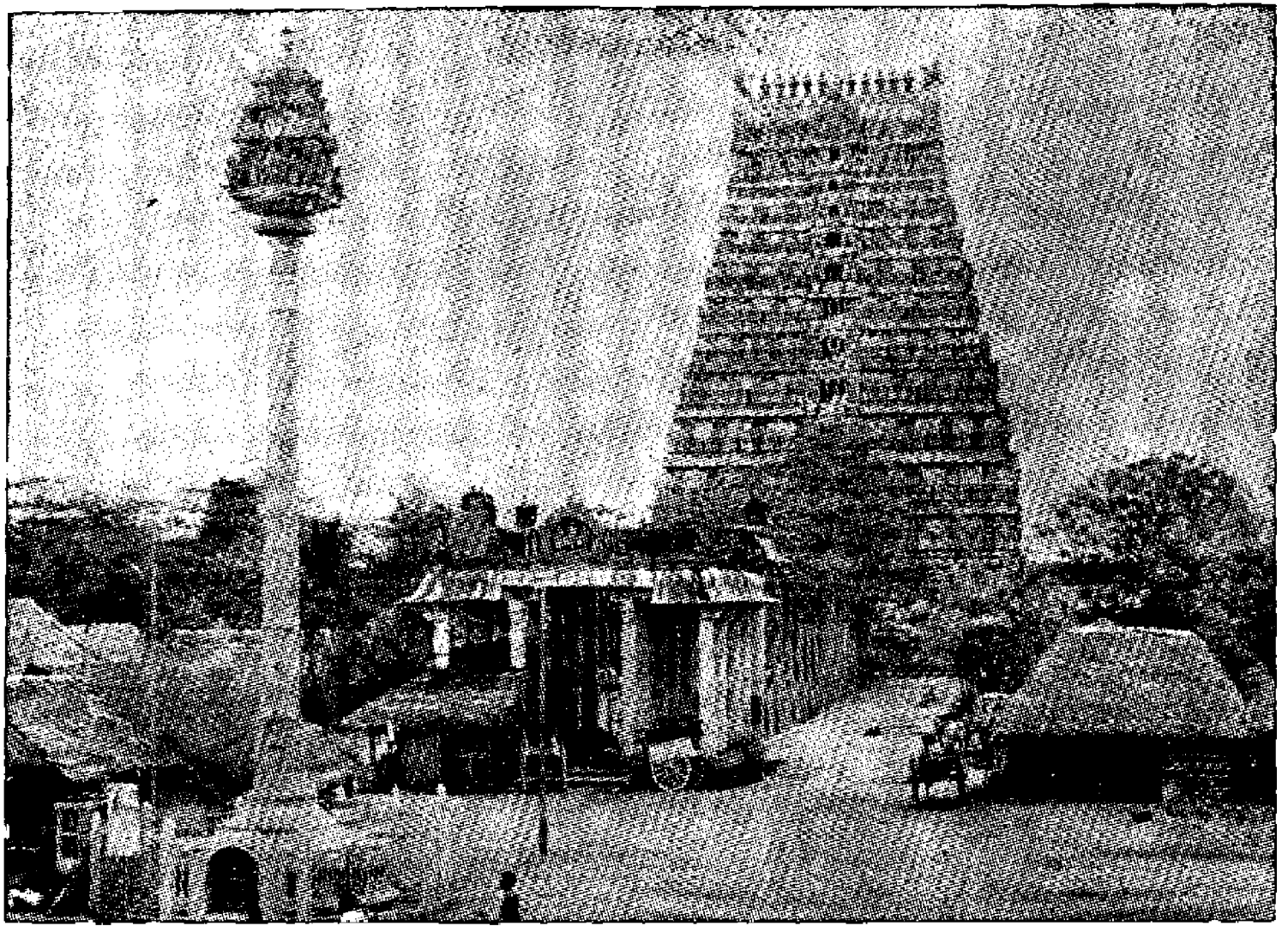
1. Sri Rajagopalaswamy Temple

The very mention of the name Mannargudi reminds one of the adage "Mannargudi Madhil Azhagu". The reference is to the massive and impressive walls (*Madhil*) of the most important Vaishnavite temple of Thanjavur district known as Sri Rajagopalaswamy Temple. Mannargudi, it may be mentioned, is a town with a population of 33,558.

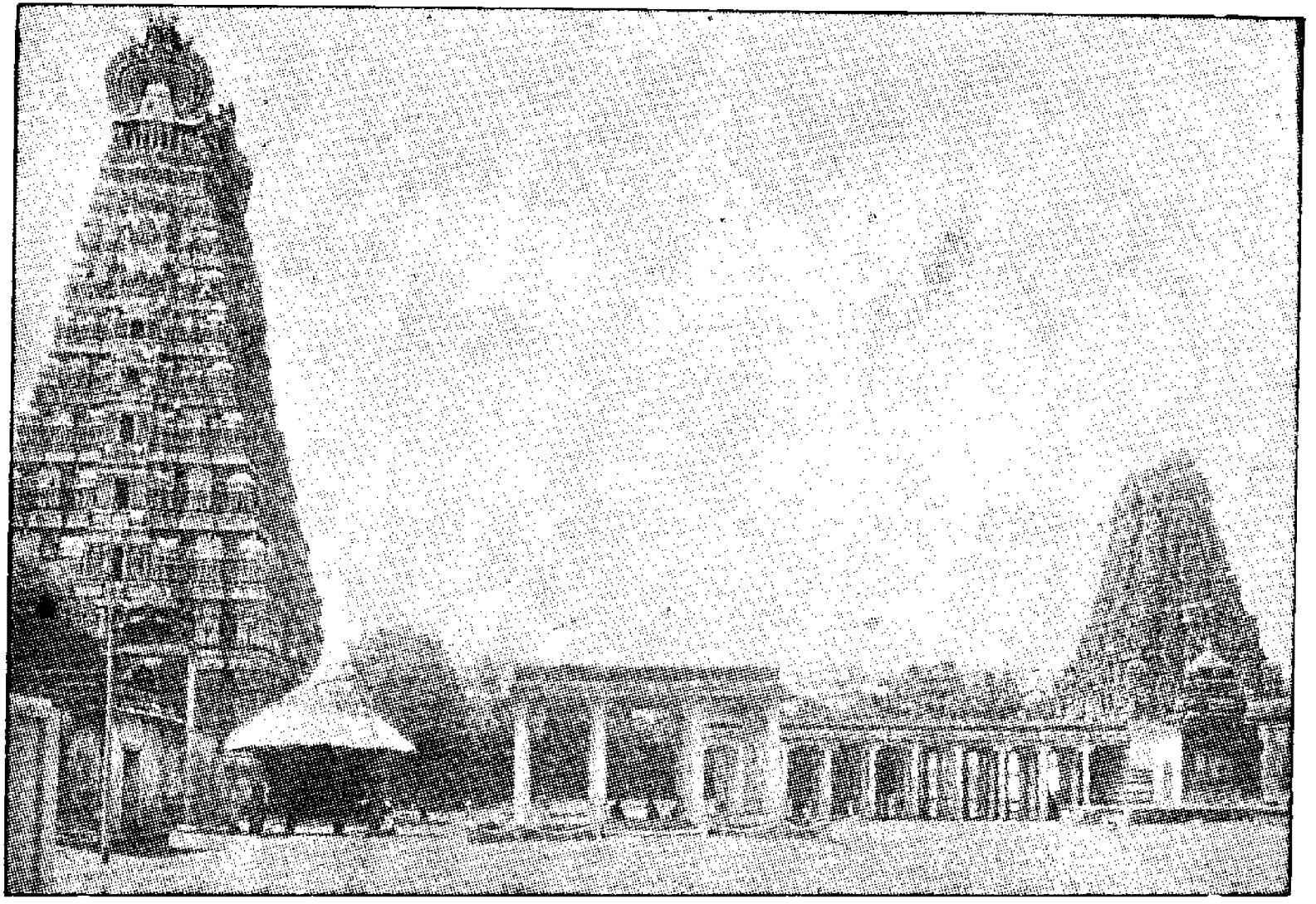
The temple is located on the banks of the river Pamani and is a couple of kilometres away from the Mannargudi railway station. The place is connected by bus as well with Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Thiruvarur, Thiruthuraipoondi and Pattukkottai. To distinguish it from Kattumannargudi near Chidambaram, this place is called Rajamannargudi.

With its 154 feet high Rajagopuram, the temple is situated over an extensive area of about 15 acres. Sri Vasudeva Perumal about 7 feet tall with His divine consorts Sri Devi and Bhudevi in standing posture is the presiding deity of this temple and the Goddess is Hemabja Nayagi. Sri Vidya Rajagopalan with His divine consorts Rukmani and Satyabhama is the festival deity and the festival Goddess is called Senkamala Thayar. The sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity was built about 1,000 years ago. The other mandapams in this temple were built later by the Vijayanagar Kings. A Kumbabishegam was performed during 1959, after some repairs and renovations.

The temple facing east has seven prakarams and sixteen gopurams. There are twenty-four separate small shrines in this temple including the presiding deity and the Goddess.



Garudasthambam and Rajagopuram of
Sri Rajagopalaswamy Temple, Mannargudi.



Rajagopuram, Inner gopuram and Mandapam.
Sri Rajagopalaswamy Temple, Mannargudi.

Vallala Maharajan Mandapam, Thousand Pillars Mandapam, Garudavahana Mandapam, Yanai Vahana Mandapam, Palakani Mandapam, Vennaithazhi Mandapam and Punnai Vahana Mandapam are the seven beautiful mandapams in this temple.

This place is famous for Theertham, Sthalam and Murthy. *Haridra Nadhi, Durwasa Theertham, Thirupparkadal, Gopika* Theertham, Rukmani Theertham, Agnikunda Theertham, Krishna Theertham, Sangu Theertham and Chakkara Theertham are the nine sacred waters here.

A characteristic feature of this renowned temple is the little but beautiful shrine of Garuda atop a monolithic pillar, 50 feet high in the forefront.

The following are the proverbs about this place.

"மன்னர்குடி மதில் அழகு."

"கோயில் ஒரு பாதி, குளம் ஒரு பாதி."

"மறையோர் மிகுந்தது மன்னர்குடியே."

The respective translations are as follows:

"The beautiful walls of Mannargudi"

"Temple and tank, fifty-fifty"

"Mannargudi, the place replete with learned people."

Seven poojas are performed daily in this temple. The priests belonging to about twenty-five families are looking after the poojas in the various Sannadhis in this temple. Antique and modern jewels worth about Rs. 4,75,600 are owned by the shrine. Thondaman Pathakkam, Amirthasinga Maharaja Pathakkam and Saraboji Raja Pathakkams are among these antique jewels. The Raja of Venkatagiri was childless. He worshipped the Lord Sri Santhanagopala Krishnan and had children. As a token of His gratitude, he presented one costly diamond necklace which is still in this temple. Rathna Nethram is a rare ornament in this temple.

Six inscriptions are found in the Garba Graham, Arthamandapam and third Gopuram. They relate to the periods of First Kulothunga Chola, Thirupuvana Chakravarthi Raja Raja Devar, Thiruppuvana Chakravarthi Rajendra Chola Devar and Konerinmai Kondan. It is understood that this temple was built in the 43rd regnal year of First Kulothunga (1113 A.D.) and the place was called 'Kulothunga Cholan Vinnagaram'.

The temple gets an annual income of about Rs. 98,000 from its lands. The temple owns about 858·53 acres of wet lands and 274·06 acres of dry lands. In some villages, the lands are being cultivated under the Co-operative Farm Scheme. The temple has provided a number of pump-sets for supplying drinking water to the local people. There is also one library. Attractive costly vahanams made of wood, silver and gold are in this temple. They are used during festival days. The annual Brahmothsavam, Adi Pooram and Ani Theppam are the three important festivals here. Brahmothsavam celebrated in the month of Panguni for eighteen days is a special feature here. This attracts thousands of people from far and near. Besides this, there are a number of festivals throughout the year.

Even though the great saints had not sung hymns, the Jeer Manavala Mamunivar, Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, one of the musical trinity and Moovalur Sabapathy Iyer have sung in praise of Sri Vidya Rajagopalan. Sri Raju Sastrigal, also known as 'Mannargudi Periawal' had composed eighteen beautiful verses in praise of Rajagopalan after seeing the deity in different 'alankarams' on the eighteen days of the festival.

The Goddess 'Sengamala Thayar' is a *Padi Thanda Pathni*'. The idol is never taken out of the temple. It is significant that the festival in Her honour is conducted within the temple itself and that the 'Adi Pooram Car' is hauled in the outer prakaram of the temple by the students and teachers of the local school.

Legend has it that the God appeared before Swarna Sigamani, a Sourashtra prince and blessed him with a child by sitting on his lap as Santhana Gopalan. The idol of Santhana Gopalan can be found by the side of that of Sri Rajagopalan in the sanctum sanctorvm of the temple. Coup'es without issues visit the temple and keep the idol of Santhanagopalan on their laps for a while in the firm hope that they too would be rid of their sins and blessed with children.

Haridra Nadhi which in reality is only a tank but bigger than even Thiruvarur Kamalalayam is about a kilometre to the north of the temple. It is stated that a river was converted into a big tank and Sri Rajagopalan performed "*Rasa Krida*" with 10,000 Gopis. The water of the tank consequently got the perfume of turmeric. Thus the tank derived its present name. A bath in the tank is considered very sacred, particularly in the month of Masi.

Mannargudi attracts devotees round the year. A bath in the holy waters and a stay for a night in this sacred place are considered equivalent to giving gift of 1,000 cows. An Executive Officer and five Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing this temple. There are in the town four sub-temples of this shrine. Several other temples like Sri Naganathaswamy Temple, Chokkanathar Temple etc., are also found in different parts of the town.

2. Sri Chokkanathaswamy And Meenakshiamman Temple

This temple is situated on the western bank of the river Pampani on Thiruvarur—Thiruthuraipoondi route. The temple is about two kilometres from Mannargudi railway station. Bus facilities are available to reach the place.

The temple is surrounded by a massive wall. Chokkanathar alias Sundaresar, a Mahalingam, facing east is the presiding

deity of this temple. Sri Meenakshi Amman, facing south, installed in the Mahamandapam is the divine consort. This temple is popularly known as Sri Meenakshi Amman Temple. The sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity is facing east in the eastern prakaram and Brahma Devar, Chandeeswarar, Durgai and Badrakali shrines are in the northern prakaram. The images of Narthana Vinayagar and Dakshinamurthy are in the southern prakaram.

According to a legend, Sage Narada advised two sages, Gopila and Gopiralar to go to Shenbagaranyam for doing penance. They came to this place and did penance. When Lord Krishna (Kannan) gave darshan, they asked Him to show the important miracles did by Him at Dwaraka. The Lord complied with their request.

As the sages did not feel like leaving this place, they settled on the bank of the River Pampani. They had a desire to witness the sixty-four miracles (*Thiruvilaiyadal*) of Lord Siva. Hence they installed a Siva Lingam there and performed poojas. Lord Siva with His divine consort Meenakshi on a Rishabam gave darshan to them. When the Sages requested Lord Siva to render the sixty-four miracles, He complied with their desire. Then the sages established a temple here and also celebrated the Brahmothsavam.

Many years later a Chola King came here on hearing about the reputation of this temple. He renovated the temple and performed Kumbabishegam.

Daily six poojas are done in this temple. It has gold and silver jewels worth about Rs. 36,000. It owns about 229·25 acres of wet and 95·84 acres of dry lands. The annual income out of them comes to about Rs. 32,000. Kamadhenu, peacock, swan, rishabam, elephant, horse, bandicoot etc., are the mounts used during festival times. Some of them reveal wonderful workmanship in wood.

The annual Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi Visagam, Meenakshi Kalyanam and Navarathri are the three important festivals in

this temple. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated for twelve days. An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

RAMAPURAM

(H/O MANNARGUDI)

Sri Jayamkondanathaswamy Temple

This temple facing east is situated on the northern bank of the river Pamani. Ramapuram forms part of Mannargudi.

The three-tiered artistic gopuram of the temple is about 300 feet high. Sri Rajathi Rajan alias Jayamkonda Cholan has built this temple as a token of gratitude to the Lord and to commemorate his great victories (*Jayam*) in the wars. He aptly named the Lord as Sri Jayamkondanathaswamy. The statue of the King has also been installed in this temple. As Raja Raja Cholan has worshipped at this place, it is also called Rajarajeswaram. Sage Vyasar had installed a Siva Lingam here. Hence it is also named Vyasapuram.

Sri Jayamkondanathar is the presiding deity and Perianayagi is the divine consort in this temple. The idols of Vinayagar, Murugar, Navagrahas, Bairavar and Nalvars are in the inner prakaram. The festival deities of Vinayagar, Somaskandhar, Amman, Murugar with His divine consorts Valli and Deivayanai, Chandrasekharar, Sambandhar, Chandeeswarar and Pidari are in the inner mandapam. A separate shrine for Lord Natarajar with His divine consort Sivakami is in the outer mandapam. The sanctum of the divine consort facing south is near the outer mandapam.

There are about six inscriptions in this temple. From one of them it is understood that the presiding deity is

named as Jayamkondacholeswarar and the divine consort Brahannayagi alias Perianayagi.

This place is famous for Murthy, Sthalam and Theertham, The tank opposite to the temple is called Jayamkondanatha Theertham and the other theertham is River Pamani alias Pampani. Kumbabishegam was performed on 22-8-1934 after the renovation of Garbha Graha, Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam, Amman temple and Natarajar Sabah.

At one time there was a special worship called "*Thirattupal Aradhana*" in which milk boiled to solid state was offered to the Lord. It is said that this Prasadham used to be sent to Sri Rajagopalaswamy Temple, the significance being that the Lord of this temple enabled Perumal in Thirupparkadal to partake of the food. This festival falling on the Rohini day in the month of Vaikasi was being celebrated with enthusiasm by both Vaishnavites and Saivites alike. This special worship is not being performed nowadays but the big vessel used for boiling milk on these occasions which is kept in the temple seems to be a reminder of Thirattupal Aradhana. The *Thanjavur District Gazetteer* states as follows in this connection.

"The Jayamkondanatha Temple is believed by the natives to have the curious property of preventing milk boiled in it from going bad and it is said that at one time there was a great demand for this milk, orders coming even from Benares for it".

The plinth area of this temple is about 19,602 sq. ft. (0·45 cents). Four poojas are daily performed. Antique jewels worth about Rs. 1,500 are owned by the temple. The temple owns about 90·55 acres of wet lands, 4·61 acres of dry lands and ten houses. The annual income comes to about Rs. 24,000. There is no Brahmothsavam, but monthly festivals are being celebrated. An Executive Officer and a single Trustee are managing the temple.

PAMPANI

Sri Naganathaswamy Temple

The temple is in Pampani or Pathaleswaram village, about 1·5 kilometres from Mannargudi railway station towards north. The place is within Mannargudi Municipality. This compact temple with its beautiful vimanams presents a pleasing appearance. There are two prakarams in the temple. The sanctum sanctorum reveals exquisite masonry workmanship. Attractive and artistic stone works are to be seen in this temple. The temple has an Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam, Sabahmandapam and Vasanthamandapam.

The presiding deity of this temple, a Swayambu Lingam, is called Sri Naganathar, Pampaninathar or Sarbapureeswarar. The Goddess is known as Amirthanayagi. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had sung hymns in praise of the shrine in which he refers to this sthalam as "Pathalam". Umapathi Sivachariar sings the praise of Pathaleswaram.

Brahma Theertham, Dhenu Theertham, Rudra Theertham and Neelathvaja Theertham are four famous theerthams here. There is a belief that one who has a holy dip in these waters on any day will be benefited. The Mango Tree here is the Sthala Viruksham.

Four poojas are daily performed. Antique jewels worth about Rs. 11,000 are in this temple. The temple owns about 200 acres of wet and dry lands and the annual revenue is about Rs. 31,000. The annual Brahmothsavam is celebrated during Vaikasi month. There are other festivals like Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Deepam and Thiruvadhirai which are also celebrated every year. The temple has a rich legendary background.

An Executive Officer and five Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following Kings are represented in the epigraphs :
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A.D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A.D.)
Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1270 A.D.)

VILLAGE : The village is called Thiruppambani.

DEITY : The deity is called Thiruppadaliswaramudaiyar.

STRUCTURES : As the inscriptions are found on the base of Mahamandapam it is difficult to assign any definite date to the structures. However, the Gopuram should have come into existence before Thirteenth Century as it carries an inscription of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya.

GIFTS ETC., : A land belonging to the temple was sold to Mudaliyar Pillai Vagisapperumal of Vadakkil Madam. Another Matha called Alalasundaran Thirumadam is also referred to in the same epigraph. Two inscriptions of Tenth Century A. D. of the reign of Raja Raja I refer to the gifts to a Vishnu temple called Sridhutivinnagar Alwar.

TIRUNATTIYATHANGUDY

H/O PALAKKURICHI

Sri Rathnapureeswaraswamy Temple

This is a Saivite temple situated in Palakkurichi village. The place is also known as Thirunattiyathangudy. Mavur road is the nearest railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi line. It is about eighty-five kilometres from Thanjavur and thirty kilometres from Mannargudi. It is also on the bus route from Thiruvarur to Vadapathimangalam. The population of this village is about 779.

It is understood that the present temple was built by a Saivite devotee belonging to the Chettiar community about one-hundred twenty years ago during the British regime. Renovations and repairs were also carried out by a devotee

of the same community about forty years back and Kumbabishegam was performed.

This temple is having a Rajagopuram with only one prakaram. The temple contains an Arthamandapam, a Mahamandapam and a Sobanamandapam. Sri Rathnapureeswaraswamy is the presiding deity and Mangalambigai is the name of the divine consort. One can worship in the temple the deities, Vinayagar, Subramaniar with Valli and Devasena, Kasi Viswanathar with Visalakshi, Gajalakshmi and Chandikeswarar.

Four poojas are performed daily by a hereditary Sivachariar. The temple owns about 48·22 acres of wet and 4·07 acres of dry lands and out of this, the annual income comes to about Rs. 6,000. It also owns some gold and silver ornaments presented by the ardent devotees. Some mounts like rishabam, peacock, bandicoot and sooran are kept here and are used during festival times. Naduvu festival (நடவு உற்சவம்) during the month of Adi is an important festival here. *Kotpuli Nayanar*, a great devotee of Siva who was a Commander to the Chola King at Tanjore was living here. There is an interesting legend concerning Saint Sundarar. When the Saint came to this temple to worship the Lord, He could not see the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum. He anxiously entreated Vinayagar to guide him. Vinayagar just showed the direction where the Lord could be seen. When Sundarar went in that direction, he saw Siva and Parvathi planting paddy in a field. Saint Sundarar requested the Lord to return to the temple and give darshan to him. The Lord is said to have acceded to the entreaties of His ardent disciple.

The temple is managed by a single Trustee and an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUNELLIKAVAL

H/O SERUVAMBI

Sri Nellivananathaswamy Temple

Surrounded by Coconut groves, small tanks and water courses, this ancient temple has a charm of its own. The

temple faces west having an 80 feet high artistic Rajagopuram with five tiers and five kalasams. Thirunellikaval is the nearest railway station on Thiruvarur-Thiruthuraipoondi route. It is about 67 kilometres from Thanjavur and about 45 kilometres from Mannargudi. Thirunellikaval is a hamlet in Seruvambi Panchayat. The population of this Panchayat is 2,485 only.

In Thevaram, this place is known as Thirunellika. The other names of this village are Arunanagaram, Sakiyamalapuram, Brahmatheerthapuram, Kuttarohaharam, Mangalapuram, Sarvothamapuram, Anandapuram, Amirthananda Panchatshara Murthypuram, Panchakeerthapuram, Panchakudapuram and Amirthavidayapuram.

The sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity Sri Nellivananathaswamy facing west and the sanctum of the Goddess Mangalambigai facing south are situated in one small beautiful and attractive mandapam. There is one prakaram inside the temple and two prakarams outside. The temple garden (Nandhavanam) is spread over the three sides of the second prakaram. Along the third prakaram is hauled the temple car during festival time. On the western side of the inner prakaram, separate shrines of Vinayagar, Murugar and Saneeswarar are situated. On the southern side there is a twelve-pillar mandapam. Colourful artistic pictures relating to the history of this temple and words inculcating moral ideas are painted on the walls of the mandapam. The temple occupies about 46 cents of land.

This place is famous for Murthy, Sthalam and Theertham. Devotees can take bath in the sacred Surya Theertham, Brahma-Theertham, Chakkara Theertham, *Noi-nivarana* (disease curing) Theertham and Chandra Theertham. Every year in the month of Masi, the rays of the Sun fall on the presiding deity in the evenings for a few days. Special poojas are performed on those days treating this as 'Surya Pooja'. There is a strong belief that the presiding deity of this temple is powerful. He is said

to absolve all the sins of the devotees. Saint Thirugnana-sambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple. The following stanza sung by him reveals the reputation of this place.

மறைத்தான் பிணிமா தொருபா கந்தன்னே
மிறைத்தான் வரையா ரரக்கன் மிகையைக்
குறைத்தான் சடைமேற் குளிர்கோல் வளையை
நிறைத்தான் நெல்லிக்கா வுள்நிலா யவனே.

There are eight Tamil inscriptions on the walls of the temple belonging to the Chola period revealing the gifts made by them to the temple. The name of the presiding deity is referred to as 'Amalakeswarar'.

Six poojas are performed daily in this temple. The annual Brahmothsavam for ten days during the month of Chithirai is an important festival. The deities will be mounted on different vahanams on those days. The Thirukkalyanam festival, Navarathri festival during the month of Purattasi and Skandha Sashti in Ayppasi are the other important festivals here.

The temple owns about 291·94 acres of wet lands and 68·03 acres of dry lands. The annual income derived out of these lands is about Rs. 34,000. This old temple has been renovated from time to time by pious devotees.

There is an interesting legend about the Goddess here. King Uthama Chola was childless. Hence he and his wife Padmamalai went to the Goddess's shrine and prayed. The Goddess, it is said, came out as a female child aged about three years and sat on the lap of the King. The King brought her up like a male child and named her as Mangalanayagi. After the King's demise, Mangalanayagi ruled with her mother's help. One day Mangalanayagi went to Thiruvarur and worshipped the Lord Thyagesar. The God

informed Her that He is going to marry Her on the first Friday in the month of Avani. Queen Padmamalai heard this glad news and arranged for the marriage at Tirunellikkaval on the particular day. Thiruvarur Thyagesar came to Tirunellikkaval as promised and married Mangalanayagi. In commemoration of this, every year in the month of Avani on the first Friday, the marriage festival of the God and Goddess is celebrated in this temple.

An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

KOTTUR

Sri Kolundeeswaraswamy Temple

Kottur is about fifteen kilometres from Mannargudi and about thirteen kilometres from Tiruthuraipoondi. The place is served by bus also. The temple is situated on the bank of river Mulliyaru. It has a population of 2,408.

There are nine theerthams including River Mulliyaru in this temple. A dip in these theerthams is considered very sacred.

Sri Kolundeeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam, is the presiding deity and Sri Madurabashini (*Thenmozhial*), the Goddess of this temple. The temple faces west whereas the sanctum of the Goddess is facing the eastern side. A Kumbabishegam was performed in the temple after renovation in 1951. The vimanams of the shrine are artistic and impressive.

A separate Sannadhi for Pradoshamurthy, Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar is found here. This is a rare feature. There are three special Lingams in the temple. The other dieties are Lord Subramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai, Natarajar with His consort Sivakami, Ganesar,

Parameswarar with Parvathi Devi, Arthanareeswarar, Durgai, Dakshinamurthy and Navagrahas. Vanni Tree is the sacred tree of this temple.

The temple occupies about 1·31 acres of land. Six poojas are performed daily according to Kamika Agamam. If an Abishegam is performed on the Masi Magham day to the Lord with considerable quantity of milk, one would have Arthanareeswarar's darshan in the Lingam itself. The same darshan can also be had by performing an Abishegam with sugar-cane juice. There are many interesting legends concerning this sacred sthalam. These have been described in the Sthala-puranam of the temple.

Saint Thirugnanasambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple.

The temple owns about 370·26 acres of wet and 72·39 acres of dry lands. Through this, the temple is getting an annual income of Rs. 42,000. Antique and modern ornaments worth about Rs. 8,600 are owned by the temple. There is a ruined artistic, old car in this temple. An Executive Officer and three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing this temple.

THIRUMAKKOTTAI

1. Sri Gnanapureeswaraswamy Temple

Thirumakkottai is about sixteen kilometres from Mannargudi. Buses are plying from Mannargudi via., this village to Muthupet. The population of this village is about 2,311.

Gnanapureswaram, Pachima Parijatha Vanam and Thirumeignanapuram are the other names of this place. Sri Gnanapureeswarar is the presiding deity and Perianayagi, the Goddess of this temple. The temple has three prakarams. It occupies

an area of 283'—211'. The tank in front of the temple known as Gnana Theertham is considered sacred. Atop a pillar called Brahmadandam on the bank of the tank is an image of Nandhi.

In the first prakaram of the temple, the image of sage Vasishta has been installed. The entrance connecting the first and second prakaram is surmounted by a small gopuram which has three tiers.

In the second prakaram one can worship Vinayagar (Darsana Ganapathy) and Muruga. The other sub-deities in the temple are Dakshinamurthy, Sthala Vinayagar, Somaskandhar, Chandeswarar, Chandrasekharar with His consorts, Viswanathar, Brahadheeswarar, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. In the north-western corner is the shrine of Murugar and Valli. Navagrahas have also been installed in the temple. Next to the Sthala Viruksham (Parijatham Tree) above the stone window of the Ambal's Garba Graham is an inspiring image of Goddess Durga. This deity is considered very powerful and devotees worship Her in large numbers. Daily worship is offered at the shrine of the Sun God in the temple. As there are sixteen Ganapathy or Vinayaga images in the temple, this place is also referred to as Shodesa Ganapathy Sthalam. There are Arthamandapam and Narthanamandapam in the temple. The idol of the Goddess is fairly big in size facing south. She is also known as Brahannayagi. Lord Natarajar with His divine consort Sivakami in this temple reveals artistic workmanship. The idols of saints Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar are kept next to Lord Nataraja's shrine. It is understood that the shrines of Viswanathar, Brahadheeswarar, Lakshmi and Saraswathi were built by the Thanjavur King in memory of his visit.

Twelve inscriptions found in this temple are relating to periods of Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar Kings. From this it is known that this temple was built about 950 years ago. One inscription is about Raja Raja Chola I who ruled over Thanjavur between 985-1014 A.D. From these inscriptions, it is understood that the presiding deity is known as Thirumei-

gnanamudaiyar and the Goddess Perianachiyar. The inscriptions also reveal the endowments made by Kulothunga Chola I, Kulasekhara Pandyan and Achutha Devaroyar. There are two copper plate inscriptions dating back to 1548 which deal with endowments to the temple.

Five poojas are performed daily in the temple by a Sivachariar according to Kamika Agama. The temple owns some gold and silver ornaments worth about Rs. 2,300. The temple gets an annual income of Rs. 21,000 through its lands to the tune of 198·54 acres. There is an artistic wooden car forty-five feet high. Further, rishabam, elephant, horse, bandicoot and peacock mounts are used during festival times. Vaikasi Visagam festival is the annual Brahmothsavam in this temple. Skandha Sashti, Soora Samharam, Karthigai Deepam and Thiruvadhirai are the other important festivals here.

There is an interesting legend about the sacred Gnana-Theertham in this temple. Kirtha Sekhara Chola Maharaja was suffering from leprosy. He took all kinds of medicines in vain. He went to Benares (Kasi) and had a dip in the Ganga. Later he went to Rameswaram and had a bath in the sea. On his return he came to this place and had a holy bath in this sacred theertham. After the bath, he found that he got rid of the disease. With overwhelming joy, he immediately built this temple. He named this place also as Maharajapuram and built a Fort here for his stay.

Five Trustees and an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

2. Sri Ranganatha Perumal Temple

This small but hoary Vaishnavite shrine is situated in Thirumakkottai, a village about sixteen kilometres from Mannargudi. The place is well served by bus. Thirumakkottai has a population of 2,311.

The temple occupies an area of about 0·47 acres. Thiruveedhi, Madavilagam and inner prakaram constitute the three prakarams of this temple. Separate shrines dedicated to the village Goddesses Mariamman and Pidari and the God Ayyanar are situated around this temple.

Sri Ranganathar, the presiding deity of this temple is in standing posture with His consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi. Garuda could be seen praying to the Lord. The festival idol of Sri Ranganathar with His two consorts is a piece of art. The presiding deity is decorated well as it is believed that the Lord is an Alankarapriyar. Navaneethakrishnan and Selvar are by the side of the presiding deity. The sanctum sanctorum faces east. Nammalwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Thirukkachi Nambi, Perialwar, Senai Mudaliar and Vishvak Senar are all installed in the Mahamandapam facing east. A separate shrine for Srinivasa Perumal facing south is to be found next to the Mahamandapam. A separate sanctum for the Goddess Ranganayagi is on the southern side of the prakaram. Two small Hanumar idols have been installed in the Vasantha-mandapam—one is the youthful figure of Hanumar and the other depicts Anjaneya, the valiant fighter.

Garuda vahanam is the only mount in this temple, used during festival times. Gold and silver ornaments worth about Rs. 1,000 are here. Four poojas are performed daily. The temple owns about 165·64 acres of wet and 412·96 acres of dry lands. The lands are being leased out and through this the annual income comes to Rs. 44,000. This is used for the payment of salaries to temple officials performing daily poojas and the celebration of the festivals.

Many rulers of the region from the Cholas onwards are said to have offered worship to the Lord. According to a legend, Sri Rama and Vibishna had worshipped Sri Ranganatha here. Some of the inscriptions in the temple have been copied and published by the Archaeological Department. The inscriptions reveal that (a) during the period of Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandyan, Narasingaraya Nayagar gave some lands

to this temple for performing daily poojas (b) during the Vijayanagar rule, one person belonging to Thondaimandalam gave lands in the name of the King to Lord Ranganathar (c) one Tirumalai Chettiar presented a wooden car and money to celebrate the festivals.

The annual Brahmothsavam is an important festival celebrated for ten days during the month of Chithirai. Gokulashtami, Karthigai and Vaikunta Ekadhasi are the other festivals celebrated during the year. About 3,000 persons witness the festival.

The temple is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of five members and an Executive Officer, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUKKALAR

Sri Parijathavaneswarar Temple

Enclosed by massive compound walls on all the four sides, this temple facing east is situated on the southern bank of the Pamani. It is located at a distance of twelve kilometres north-west of Thiruthuraipoondi. It has a population of 1,434. Situated on Mannargudi-Muthupettai road, it is well served by bus. Its lofty Rajagopuram soars to a height of 150 feet. This place is otherwise known as Parijathavanam.

Sri Parijathavaneswarar or Sri Kalarmulainathar, said to be a Swayambu Lingam is the presiding deity facing east and Amirthavalli facing east is the divine consort of this temple. The idols of Vinayagar, Dakshinamurthy, Subramaniar, Lakshmi, Durgai and Chandeswarar are installed in this temple. Durwasa Theertham is just opposite to the sannadhi. Pavala Malligai Tree, inside the temple is the Sthala Viruksham.

The pillars in this temple reveal skilful workmanship. There are three prakarams in this temple. The area occupied by the shrine is about 1·46 acres. Vasanthamandapam is on the north-eastern corner. Saint Tirugnanasambandhar had sung devotional songs in praise of the Lord. Six poojas are performed daily by a Sivachariar.

The temple owns sizable landed property 149·69 acres of wet and 76·44 acres of dry lands. It also possesses eight houses in Thirukkalar village. The temple has modern ornaments worth about Rs. 3,000. The annual income of the temple through the lease of the landed property is about Rs. 22,000. The annual Hundi collection comes to about Rs. 70 only. Besides five cars, four rishabams (two silver and two wood) Kamadhenu, elephant, horse, peacock, bandicoot, boodham, boodhagi, Nandhi and Sooran are the mounts in this temple used during festival times. There is also a palanquin. The annual Brahmothsavam which was an important festival is not celebrated nowadays.

There is a legend to the effect that once upon a time Lord Siva gave darshan as Natarajar to Sage Durvasa and other hermits. A separate shrine for Lord Natarajar in the temple is said to support this legend.

There is a small shrine for Sri Andavar or Veerasekhara Gnana Desika Swamigal who was a great devotee of the Lord. Under the guidance of this saint who was born in the year 1847 A.D., the temple was renovated and a Kumbabishegam was performed.

The informative inscriptions in the temple have been copied and published by the Government.

The temple is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of three members and an Executive Officer, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

A brief account of other important temples in the taluk is given below:

Koilvenni is a place about two kilometres from the railway station of the same name. There is a Siva temple here mentioned in the Thevaram. This temple is said to have been built by Karikala Chola in commemoration of his victory in a war. The presiding deity is known as Vanni Karumbeswarar. The temple of Sri Kailasanathar in Mannargudi Town is also an ancient Siva temple having been built by Chola Kings. Legend goes to say that the Lingam of this place was worshipped by the demon Banasuran. The deity is consequently known as Asura Lingam. The Goddess Sri Brahannayagi is said to offer solace to one and all who pray to Her. Thirurameswaram is six kilometres east of Mannargudi. It is a place of much antiquity and was known as Nedumanal or Madanamanjari-Chathur-Vedimangalam. The temple here is dedicated to Sri Ramanatheswarar and Goddess Mangalambigai. There are a number of inscriptions chiefly of Raja Raja I and Rajendra Chola. There is a belief that the Lingam of this place was worshipped by Sri Ramar.

In Mahadevapatnam situated ten kilometres south-west of Mannargudi is a ruined Fort supposed to have been built by Tuljaji Raja. The thick ramparts of this Fort still bear marks of cannon balls. The Fort was held by Hyder Ali during his occupation of the country and was captured from him after a big fight by the English in 1781. There is an important Siva temple here dedicated to Sri Viswanathaswamy.

Perugavalandan, twenty kilometres south of Mannargudi is known for its private Chatram founded by a rich ryot and is endowed with 420 acres of land. A Vedha school is attached to it. The Goddess Annapoorani Amman whose image is in the attitude of a woman serving meals in the temple is worshipped. The chatram distributes free 'Kadi kanji' which is considered to cure fever and cattle diseases. Perambur is at a distance of

five kilometres from Nidamangalam railway station where the Siva temple dedicated to Sri Jambunathaswamy exists. This temple contains some interesting inscriptions relating to Kulothunga II. Punnavasal is three miles from Kulikarai railway station, where there is a temple dedicated to Sri Madhavapureeswarar. His divine consort is Mangalambigai. There is a separate shrine for Subramaniar within the precincts of this temple facing south which is a peculiar feature. Lord Subramaniar of this place is highly venerated.

Sri Bala Dhandayudhapani Temple in Thiruppalakudi is a popular one. It is believed that those who sincerely pray to the Lord of this temple will get their desires fulfilled.

Kazhuvathur is a place situated at a distance of eighteen kilometres from Mannargudi. The nearest railway station is Muthupettai. The ancient Siva temple here is dedicated to Sri Jatayupureeswarar. His divine consort is known as Soundaranayagi Amman. It is said that the mythological Vulture King 'Jatayu' attained salvation in this place and hence the Lord is named as Jatayupureeswarar.

NAGAPATTINAM TALUK

THIRUVARUR

Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple

Thiruvarur is a well-known town in Thanjavur District. It is forty kilometres east of Thanjavur. Its population is 30,137. It is on the State Highway connecting Thanjavur and Nagapattinam with a railway junction as well.

Situated in the heart of the town, the temple which occupies a huge area of 15·23 acres is surrounded by broad streets (Raja Veedhis). Its tall gopurams crowning the four entrances seem to beckon the pilgrims from miles away. The temple is enclosed by massive thirty feet high stone walls facing east. On the western side is the celebrated tank Kamalalayam with a temple of Naganathaswamy at the centre. The tank extends over an area of 18·22 acres.

This shrine dating back to the Chola period will interest the religious and the artist. The eastern gopuram, which is the tallest, rises to a height of 118 feet and how it soars! Scholars assign this artistic tower to the Vijayanagar period. It is noted for its wealth of architectural details and sculptural embellishments.

The eastern gateway is the main entrance. Outside the eastern gopuram the shrines of Vinayagar and Murugar are located on either side. Crossing this entrance one comes across a court with a number of stone pillars. The thousand pillars

Mandapam or *Devasiriya* Mandapam is a remarkable structure. The outermost third prakaram is about 300 feet wide. Three wells whose water is held sacred are located in the prakaram,

The entrance to the second prakaram has a gopuram over it called Ariyan Gopuram. There are a number of small shrines in this prakaram. There are Lingams worshipped by Sages like Gouthamar, Kasyappar and Agasthyar and *rulers like Sibi and Musukundha, and there are sancta for* Saptha Madhar, Anandeswarar etc. The hoary shrine of Achaleswara here is hailed as a sthalam within a sthalam. This is considered an early Chola monument of incomparable charm. Following is an Archaeologist's view of this small shrine:

"Axially the shrine consists of an almost square sanctum preceded by a vestibule in front of which is a Mahamandapam. The dvitalaprasada (two storeyed) variety of the vimana with its globular Sikhara and the four square and an equal number of wagon-shaped pavilions above the cornice here are features akin to many of the Chola Temples. On the north and south walls of the west facing vestibule are four niches with their simple and characteristic decorative elements including the pilasters surmounted by an elliptical aureole. The first niche on the north is hidden by a mandapam and in the rest are enshrined fine carvings of Arthanari, Durga and Bhikshadanar while the niches in the south correspondingly carry two Natarajar, a Ganesa and an Agasthya.

These installed images are somewhat small and slender and preserve the poise and dignity of the early Chola sculptures. Detailed individualised and strikingly realistic treatment of jewellery and costumes particularly the somewhat diaphonous drapery is a noted hall-mark of this group of images. Though these sculptures have shown on enormous capacity for both observation and execution, their insistent tendency to idealize is also perceptibly evident. A few images, obviously lack intense vitality but possess in abundance an ethereal serenity.

The sculptures of Brahma, Lingodhbhava and Dakshina-murthy in the three main projection of the sanctum are

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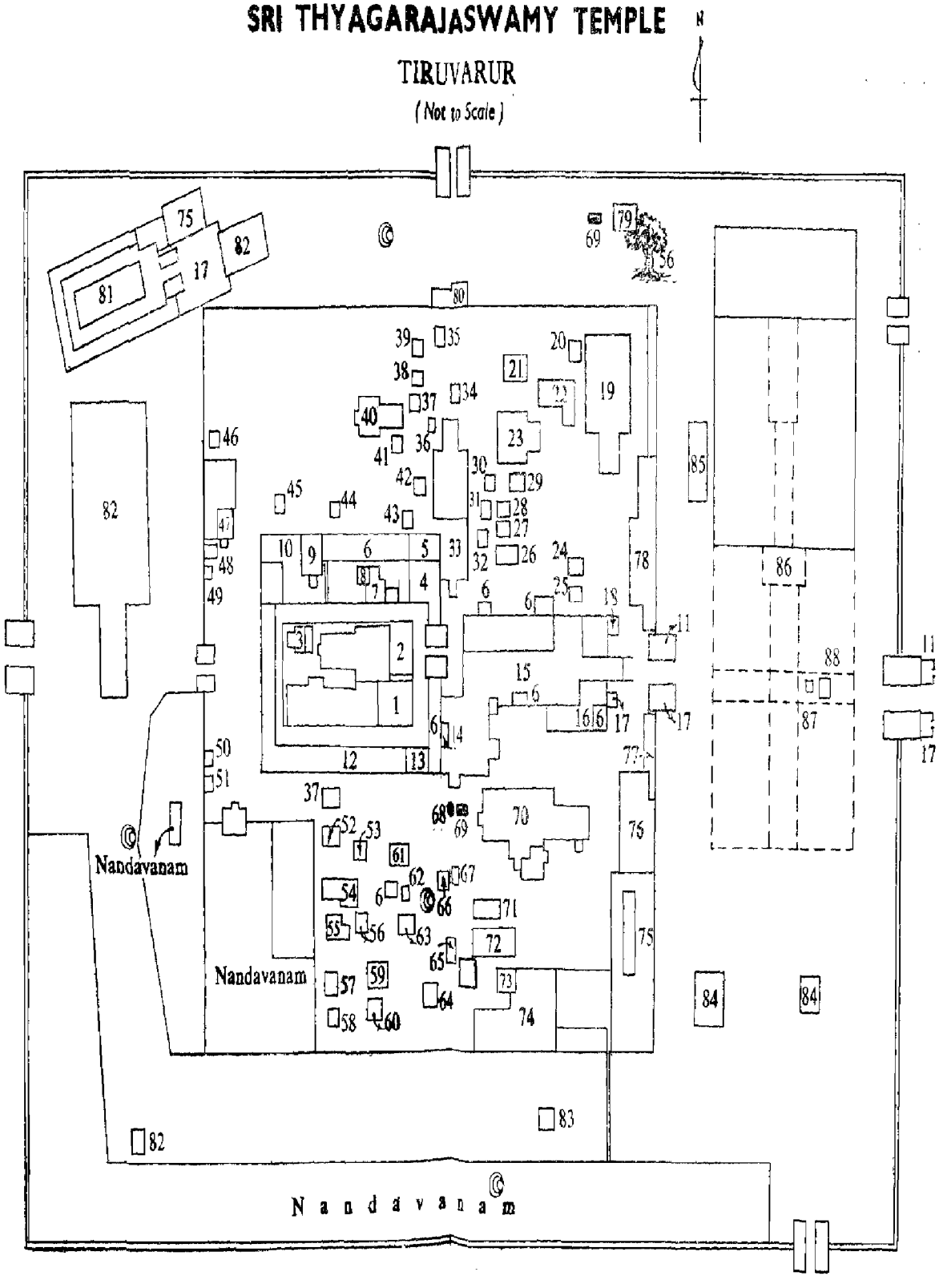
SRI THYAGARAJASWAMY TEMPLE

TIRUVARUR

(Not to Scale)



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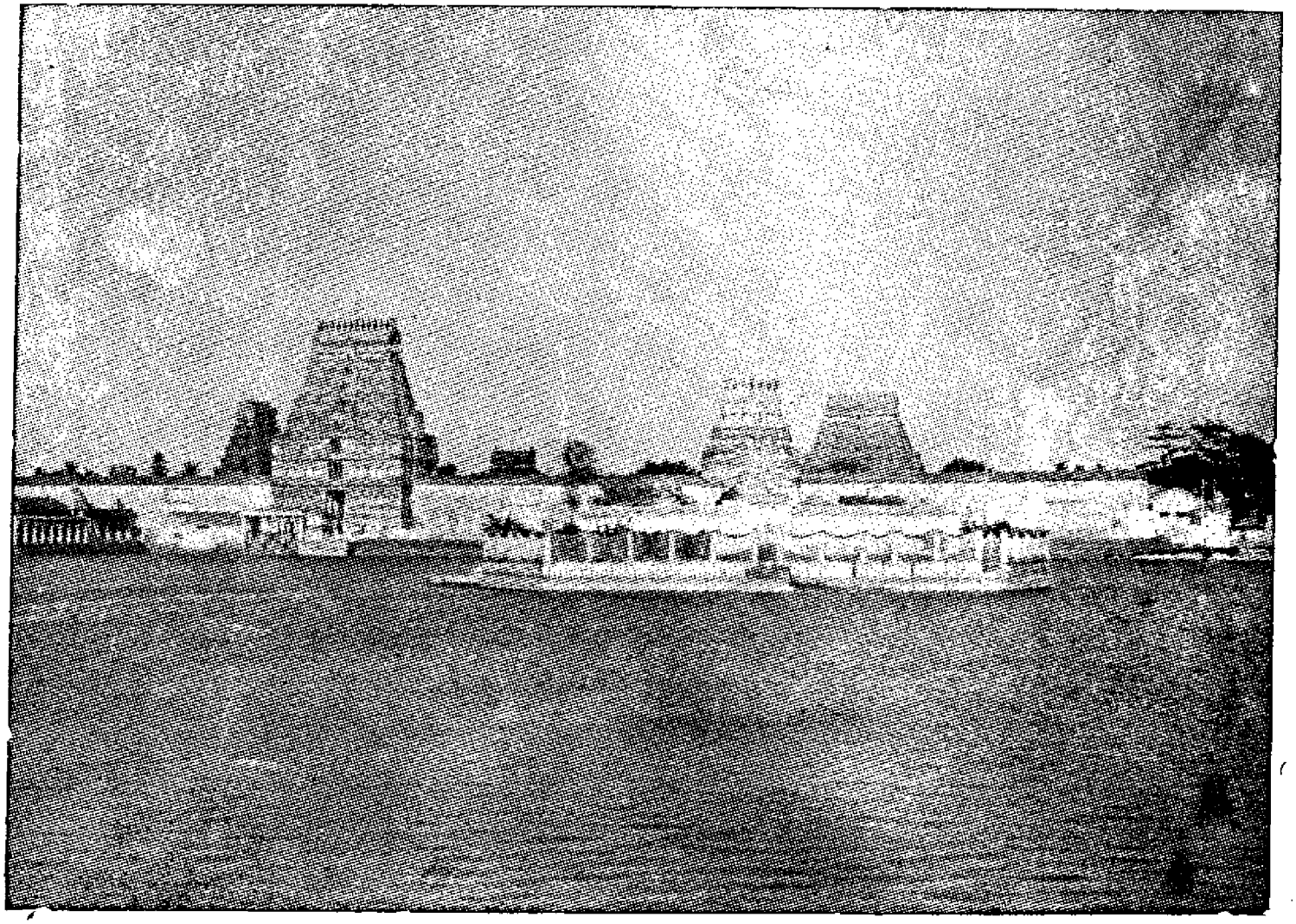
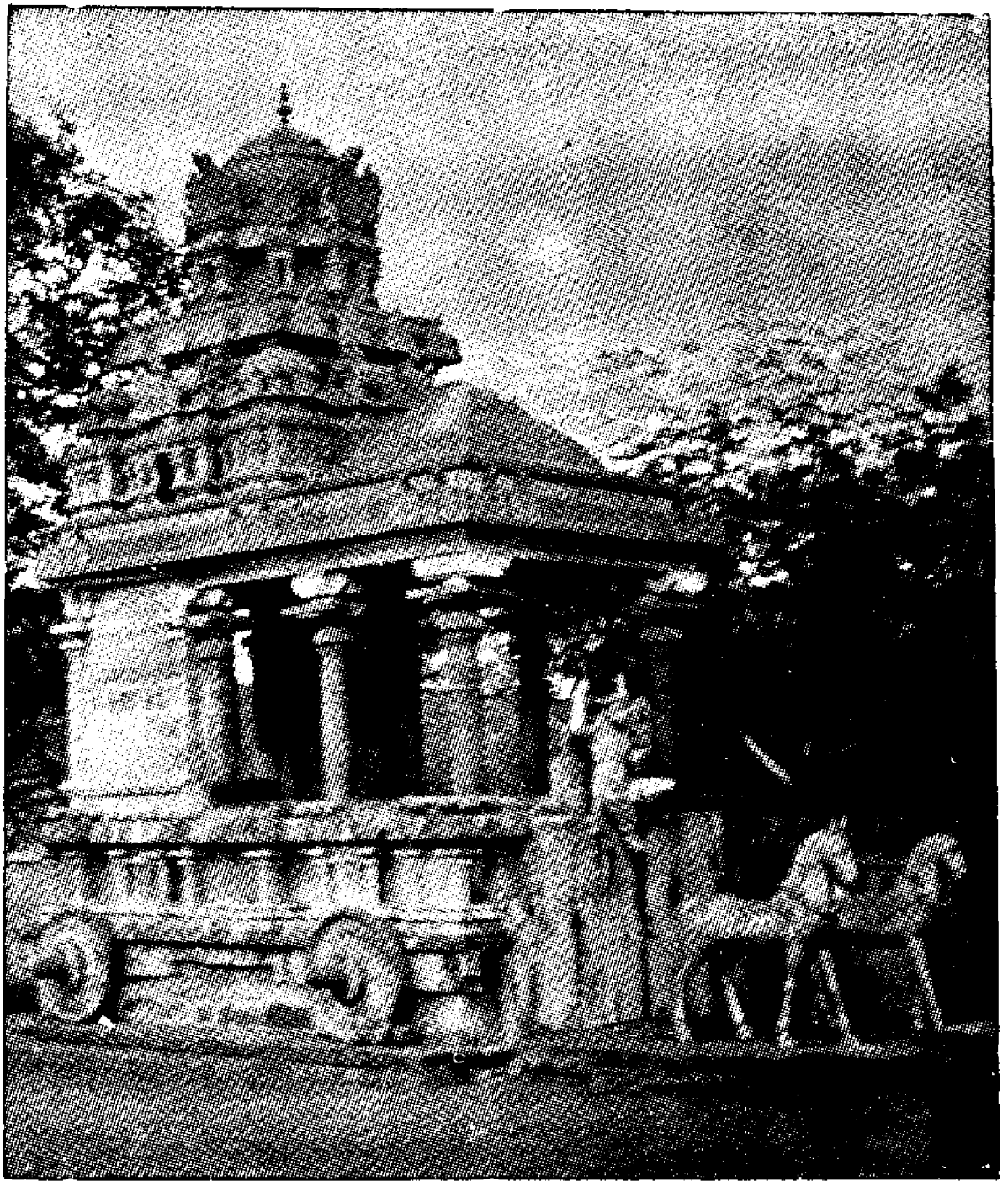
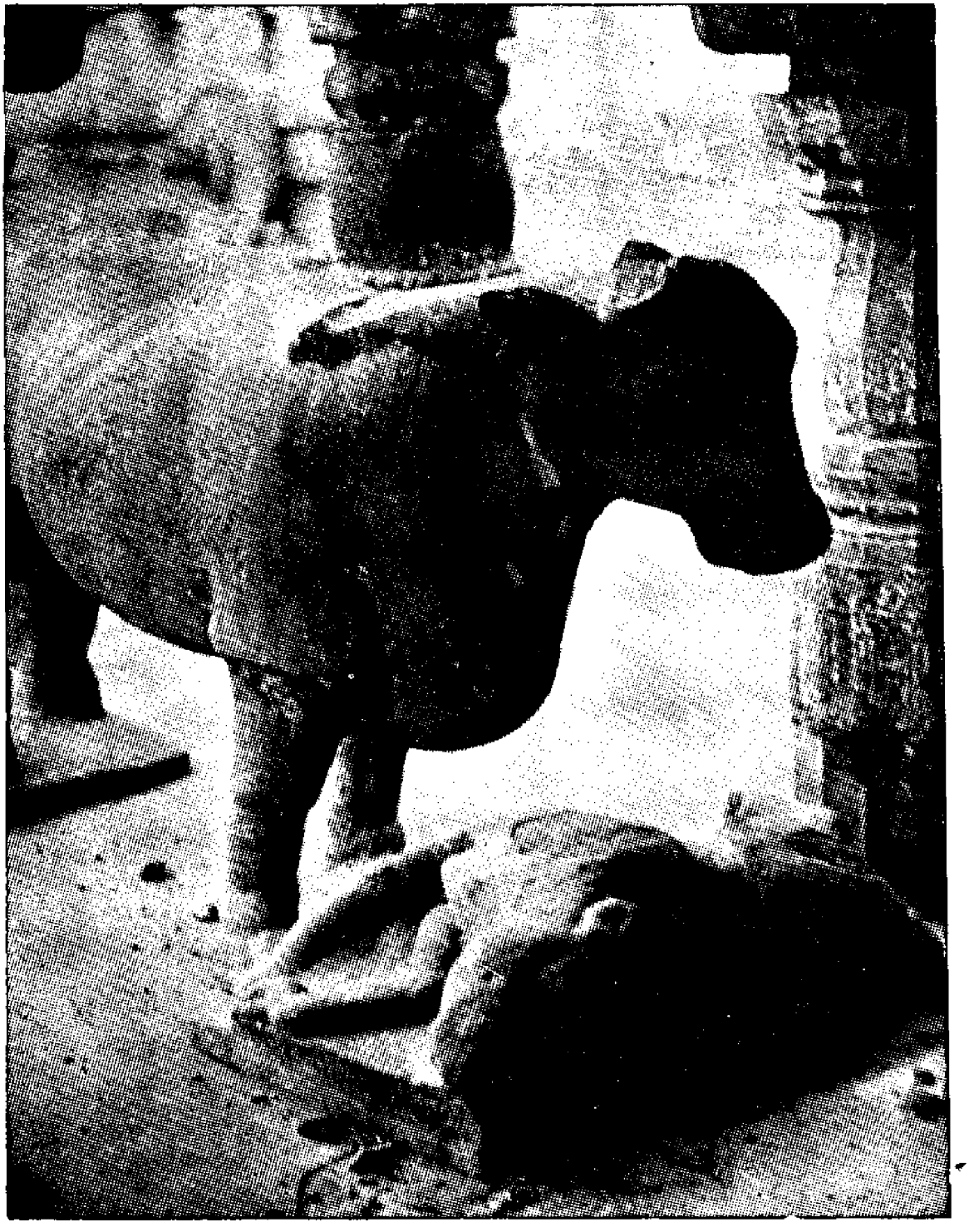


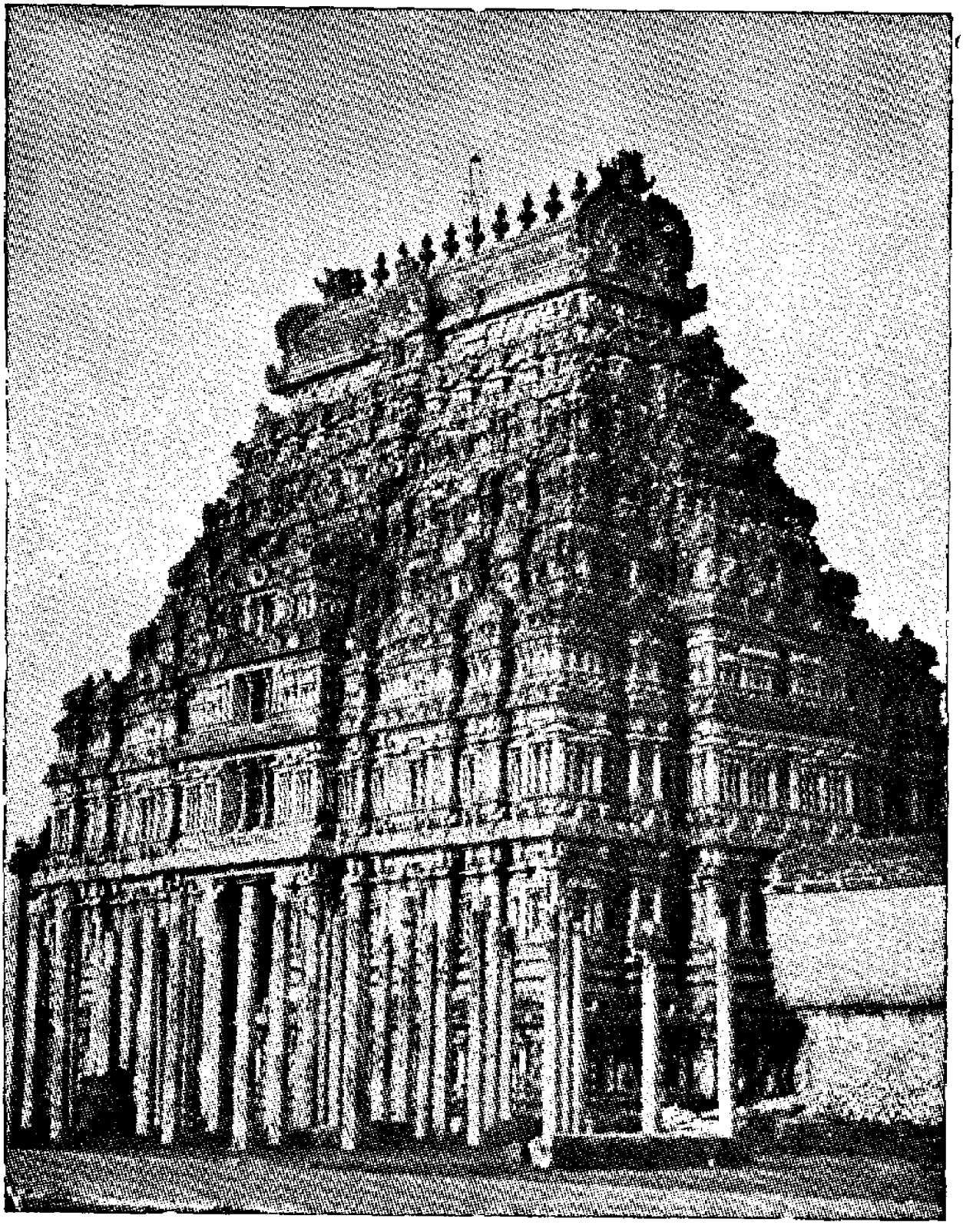
A view of the Temple and tank of
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple, Thiruvarur



A scene from the
Manunidhi Chola Story,
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple
Thiruvarur.



A depiction of Manunidhi Chola story
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple
Thiruvarur.



The Eastern Gopuram with thousand pillars
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple
Thiruvarur.

Panchamuga Vadhyam
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple
Thiruvarur.

flanked on either side by an unidentified portrait. These portraits are rather stylised and the general tendency manifested here appears to be to merge the individual in a type. These radiant carvings of one of the most creative epochs of South Indian art thrill us by their astonishing suggestion of life. Not only the sculptor here was not constrained by the conventions of proportions, pose and costume which inflexible canons imposed on him, but was rich in imagination and free in his style. True, in a few cases suppleness and freedom are sacrificed to mathematical schematism but it cannot be denied that these sculptures in their free and easy poses offer a marked and pleasant contrast to the stiff attitudes of a few of their Pallava precursors and the ostentatious vacuity that characterise many of their successors."

Achaleswarar has been sung by saint Thirunavukkarasar. The divine consort is called Vandarkuzhali. Achaleswaram is also known as "*Thiruvarur Araneri*" in Tamil. The Natarajar image here is taken out in procession during festival times. Sri Achaleswarar sannadhi faces west. The other shrines considered as Sthalams within the temple of Sri Thyagarajaswamy are Adakesam (*Appu*), Anandesam (*Vayu*), Arunachalesam (*Thejo Lingam*), Viswakanmesam and Siddhiswaram.

The principal deities of Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple are as follows :-

Sri Ingalakasu Vinayagar or Azhagiya Chola Vinayagar is in between the sannadhis of Sri Thyagarajar and Vanmikanathar. It is said that the King Cheraman Peruman collected a gift of five kalasams of copper coins from the public and made this Vinayagar and named it as Ingalakasu (Five Kalasams of coins) Vinayagar.

The principal deity is called Sri Vanmikanathar or Putridankondar. The Lord's consort is Goddess Somakalambigai or Piriyavidaiammai and the Goddess is in a separate sanctum in the Arthamandapam. She is also popularly known as 'Padi Thandal'. It is said that the Goddess is never taken out of the temple precincts and hence she is called 'Padi Thandal'.

The idol of Sri Thyagarajar, the chief deity, and that of His consort Kondi on an artistic Rathna Simhasana are very impressive. The Lord who is well adorned with jewels and flower garlands is worshipped with great veneration by the devotees. A rare feature of this temple is the standing posture of Nandhi in the sanctum sanctorum. In the mandapam opposite to this sannadhi we could see the images of Saint Sundarar, his wife Paravai Nachiyar and Cheraman Peruman. Nandhi faces Sri Thyagarajar. Sri Thyagarajar has 108 names like Vidhividangar, Thyagavinodhar etc.

The Sthala Vinayagar in the south-western corner of the innermost prakaram is called Vathapi Ganapathi. The image of Goddess Nilothpalambikai in a standing posture is in a separate shrine. A notable feature is that She is depicted as blessing the child Muruga, who is on the shoulder of a maid, with her left hand. Vidangar is the name of the *Spadika* Lingam. Abishegams are made to this Lingam during pooja times.

Goddess Kamalambigai is in another shrine. The Goddess with four hands is depicted as performing penance in the Yogasana posture. The Navagrahas in the temple are in a row. Before the Manthra Peetam behind the sanctum sanctorum and the Akshara Peetam behind the shrine of Kamalambigai, devotees stay for a while, close their eyes and meditate.

The Rudra Durgai shrine in the second prakaram attracts a large number of devotees. An interesting feature with regard to this Goddess is that pooja is done during *Rahukala*. Those suffering from mental disorders are said to be cured if they worship this powerful deity. It is believed that unmarried girls who pay homage to the Goddess get married early.

Great saints and savants have visited this ancient temple. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar has sung five Thiruvarur Padhigams. Thirunavukkarasar or Appar Swamigal has sung twenty-one hymns in praise of Thiruvarur Sthalam. Saint Sundarar who spent the major part of his life in Thiruvarur has sung eight Arur Padhigams. Paravai Nachiyar, a native of

this place and a great devotee of Sri Thyagaraja, married Sundarar. Her house is now a place of worship. Saint Arunagirinathar has sung the glory of Murugar in Thiruvarur in his Thiruppugazh. Thiruvarur is noted as the place where the musical trinity Sri Thyagaraja, Sri Shyama Sastri and Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar were born. Sri Muthuswamy Dikshithar has composed a number of songs on Goddess Kamalambal. The popular song "Vathapi-ganapathim" in the Raga Hamsadvani, was composed by Dikshitar in praise of the deity Vathapi Vinayagar in this temple ; the idol in the temple is said to have been brought from Vathapi.

The structure of the temple is of great architectural interest. The image of Dwarapalaka in the eastern Gopuram entrance, the Arumugar image in Kamalambal shrine, the Nandhi in the Vanmikanathar sannadhi are fine works of art. The story of Manu Needhi Chola's sentence of death on his only son for driving his chariot over a calf is depicted in a sculpture near the temple. The temple has very interesting old paintings on the inner walls and ceilings. Apart from Devasiriya Mandapam there are a number of Mandapams like Sabapathy Mandapam, Vasantha Mandapam etc. Raja Raja II (1151-1163) constructed in his sixteenth regnal year, the big Gopuram and the Sabapathy Mandapam. This Mandapam which was used during festival times now houses the Devasthanam Office and Library.

That many a Chola and Pandya ruler had evinced keen interest in the temple is revealed by the number of inscriptions on the temple walls which have been copied. The *Tanjore Gazetteer* gives the contents of important inscriptions as follows :

"One of them dated 1560 says that Gnanaprakasa Pandaram of Thiruvarur was appointed as the Supervisor of certain temples. This person is believed to have been the founder of the Dharmapuram Madam and a portion of the trust properties called Rajan-Kattalai still vests in the Madam. Another inscription shows that a Vinayagar Temple was set up on the west bank of a tank in the time of Kulo-

thunga Chola III. This is perhaps the temple called Koothadum Pillaiyar Koil to the west of the Kamalalayam Tank. Shrines for Vinayagar and Subramanyar are also stated to have been built in the southern street in front of the temple. These exist even now, the latter being known as Kumaran Koil.

Sembiyan Madeviar is stated to have built a shrine and made endowments for it besides presenting silver vessels to the main temple for the merit of her son Uthama Chola. A King named Rajendra Deva is said to have constructed a golden pavilion. The inscription relating to this mentions the exact quantity of gold used upon the work of gilding. Another inscription shows that for the erection of this pavilion all the gold and silver vessels in the temple treasury were used. There is evidence to show that certain portions of the Garbha Graham and the Arthamandapam were also gold-plated, but the plating has now disappeared. An inscription of Rajendra Chola I contains a long list of the valuable presents made by him. These include gold ornaments set with jewels, pearls, necklaces, gold utensils and lamp stands. More jewels and utensils were presented by Rajadhi Raja and Rajendra II. Pearls, Corals, jewels and precious stones and lands are also said to have been presented to the temple by another Chola King. The keys of the jewel chests were put in charge of two custodians instead of one and penalties were laid down for cases of loss or mishandling. One of the inscriptions relates to the time of the Maharashtra Raja Sarabhoji (1711-1727) and shows that he made repairs to the temple".

Poojas are performed six times daily for Sri Thyagarajaswamy and Sri Vanmikanathar. The temple has valuable jewellery amounting to Rs. 3,84,700. Among the many festivals celebrated round the year, the Panguni Brahmothsavam is the most important when thousands of people congregate here. During this festival, Sri Thyagarajaswamy is taken round the streets, in the huge Ther (Car) known as "*Azhi Ther*" of the temple, to the accompaniment of Nadhaswaram music. It is said that it has to be drawn by about 8,000 persons. The gigantic and artistic Ther (Car) which has given rise to the adage, "*Tiruvarur Ther Azhagu*", could be seen in the sannadhi street.

The temple has a rare instrument called Panchamukha Vadhyam. It obviously represents the five faces of Siva. With the five heads of the drum tuned to the Swaras *Ri*, *Ga*, *Ma*, *Da*, and *Ni* with pots on the sides for *Sa* and *Pa*, the instrument spells out the musical scale. There is a Nadhaswaram called Barinayanam in this temple.

There are as many as thirteen Kattalais or Trusts for the maintenance of the temple. Each Kattalai has separate Trustees and property. The important Kattalais are Abishega Kattalai, Annadhana Kattalai, Rajanga Kattalai, and Ulthurai Kattalai. Annadhana Kattalai is now utilised for providing midday meals to poor boys. The temple owns about 2,500 acres of land. The administration of the temple is looked after by an Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

A beautiful Kalyana Mandapam at a cost of Rs. 2 lakhs has been constructed on the eastern side of the temple. The cost was met by the Abishega Kattalai Trust. The Mandapam which is meant for performing marriages by the public was declared open in June 1969. An over head tank has been built inside the temple for providing water supply to the public.

The temple has a rich legendary background. Regarding the origin of the temple, a legend says that Indra got from Vishnu an image of Thyagarajaswami (the Lord of Thiruvarur now) for assisting him in winning over the demons. He was directed not to lose it on any account but was forced by a trick to give it to the King of Thiruvarur in return for assistance in fighting another battle. The King installed the image in Thiruvarur and Indra was punished.

With several small shrines around the main temple of Sri Thyagarajaswamy, Thiruvarur attracts round the year pilgrims even from distant places.

SIKKAL

Sri Navaneetheswaraswamy Temple

Sikkal holds a prominent place in the Pilgrim Map of South India. Though dedicated to the Lingam, Sri Navaneetheswarar, the temple here is known for the popular deity, Sri Singaravelar or Lord Murugar who attracts pilgrims and tourists in large numbers from far and near.

Situated at a distance of about six kilometres from the Port Town of Nagapattinam on the Thiruvarur road, Sikkal is easily accessible by both road and rail. With green fields and swaying Palms all around, the village is located in one of the most fertile belts of Thanjavur District. The temple with its impressive gopuram is right in the heart of the village.

This is an ancient shrine renovated from time to time. It is said that the original temple was built by a King called Musukundha Chakravarthi. According to an inscription the temple walls are replete with inscriptions. The shrine was renovated by the Chola King Kochchengannan. In the Thirteenth Century Veerapandi Deva, a Pandyan King of Madura, made handsome endowments to Sri Navaneetheswaraswamy. A Vijayanagar King gave a number of gold coins to Sri Singaravelar in 1350 A. D. The temple has attracted the poetic piety of Saints Thirugnanasambandhar and Arunagirinathar. All these facts lend evidence to the antiquity of the temple. The 70 feet Rajagopuram was, however built in 1933. The latest renovation was carried out in 1960. This is one of the well kept temples in the district.

The temple, on an area of about two acres faces east. Including the outer streets and Madavilagam, there are four prakarams for the shrine. Crossing the main entrance one reaches a spacious pillared hall called Kirthigaimandapam with the ceiling decorated with the beautiful paintings depicting the valorous deeds of Lord Murugar. After this Mandapam is the Dwajasthamba-Mandapam, where one can

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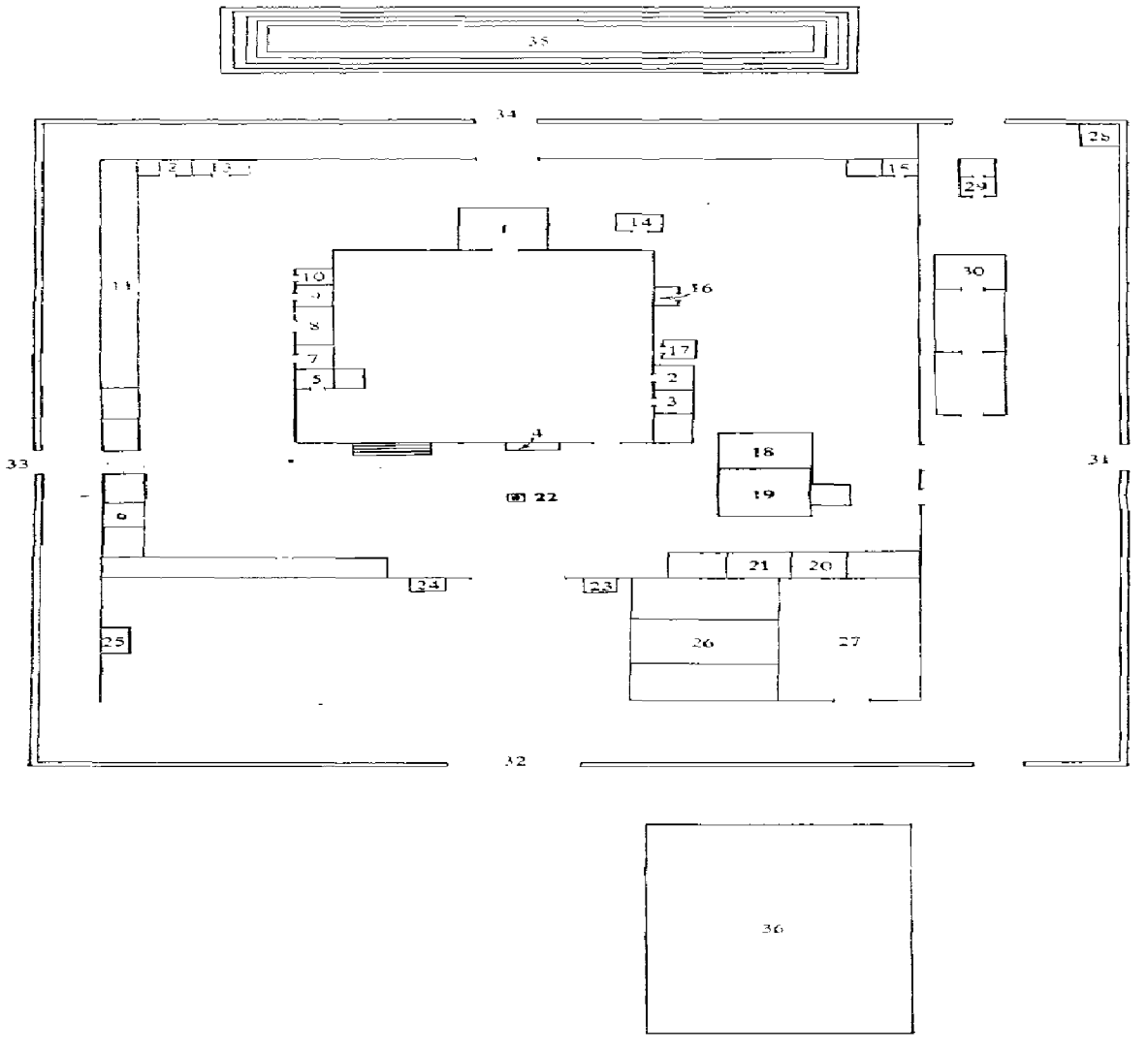
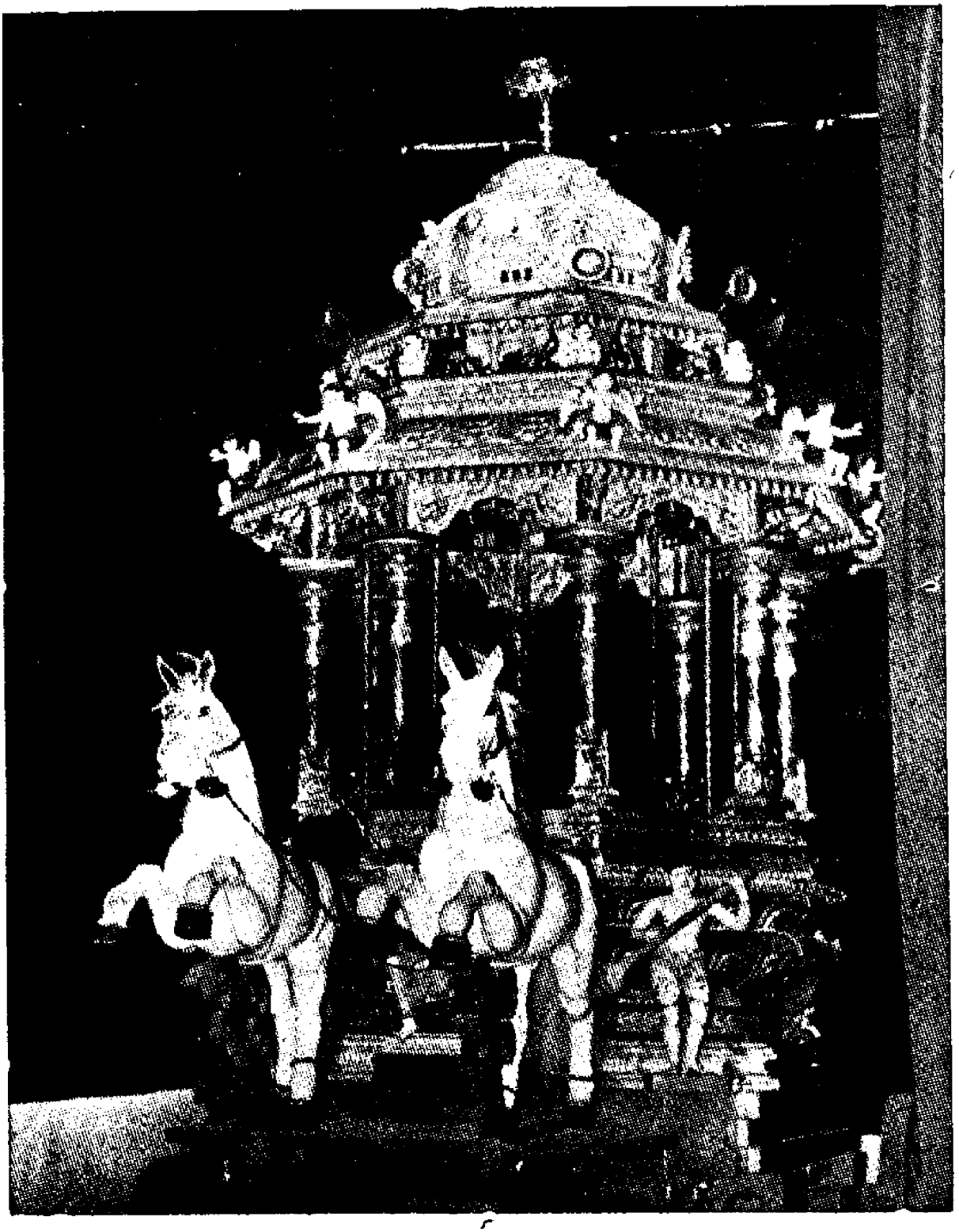
SRI NAVANEETHEESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

SIKKIL

(Not to Scale)





The decorated Silver Car
Sri Navaneetheeswaraswamy Temple
Sikkal.

worship Sundara Ganapathi and the Amman Velnedunkanni. The Goddess's shrine faces south. Later, one has to ascend a few steps to reach a raised structure called Kattumalai, where the principal deities have been installed.

The graceful metallic idol of Lord Singaravelar with Valli and Deivayanai, is to be seen in the Mahamandapam. The sanctum sanctorum with the Lingam faces east. The sanctum of Arumugar (Moolavar) is in a separate sanctum in the inner prakaram behind the sanctum sanctorum. On Kirthigai days when special worship is offered to Lord Singaravelar the Panchalogam idol is brought to the Kirthigaimandapam and hundreds of devotees gather in this mandapam on those occasions.

The Brahmothsavam of the temple is celebrated for ten days in the month of Chithirai. Devotees muster in their thousands for the ten day Sashti celebration, immediately after Deepavali in October which is celebrated with great eclat. On the fifth day, of the Car festival the bejewelled idol is taken to the Velnedunkanni Amman sannadhi where Singaravelar receives the Vel (*Gnana Sakthi*) from the Goddess to kill Surapadman, the demon, the next day. The idol, it is said, becomes completely wet with perspiration at that time. The Lord is then taken to Somaskandhar sannadhi adjoining the sanctum sanctorum, where He with Valli and Devasena stays for well neigh an hour. After a lapse of about four decades, the floating festival or Theppothsavam in Chithirai has been resumed in the year 1969, thanks to the efforts of the Temple authorities.

There is a spacious Kalyana Mandapam in front of the temple, which can accommodate about 3,000 people. The Kalyanam or marriage of the Lord takes place here on the seventh and eighth day with Deivayanai and Valli respectively during the Sashti celebrations.

There are a number of silver plated and gold plated vahanas like silver rishabam, gold plated horse, peacock and ram. A silver plated chariot costing about Rs. 1·25 lakhs has

been made by the Devasthanam. Twice in a year, Lord Singaravelar is taken in procession in the chariot through the streets. The total value of the vahanams is Rs. 1,72,000.

Poojas are performed six times daily. This popular temple has large movable and immovable property. It owns 1072·09 acres of land and thirty-six houses. The jewellery of the temple which includes costly items, like gem set Kreetam and Vel amount to Rs. 2,57,700. The annual income from all sources is about Rs. 1,68,270.

Liberal donations have been made from the surplus funds of the temple for the renovation and Kumbabishegam of several other temples in the State. About 200 poor children are given free noon-meal every day out of temple funds. An orphanage containing about thirty students is run by the Devasthanam. A Thiruppugazh School and a Library are the other institutions maintained by the temple. People of the village take water from the taps provided by the temple authorities. An over-head tank has been installed for supply of water through taps. A rest house consisting of eight suites with modern amenities has been constructed near the temple.

A number of marriages are performed in the temple by the public in a year. A nominal fee of Rs. 10 per marriage is collected by the Devasthanam authorities. Recently the Executive Officer has been authorised to register the marriages performed in the temple as well as outside.

There is a Vishnu temple dedicated to Lord Kolavamana Perumal adjoining this main temple. The divine consort in this temple is Komalavalli Thayar. This is also an ancient shrine.

The temple has an interesting legendary background. Sage Vasishta, it is said, performed penance here and obtained the divine Cow, Kamadhenu. The place was flooded with milk of Kamadhenu and after some time it turned into butter. With the butter thus obtained, the sage made a Lingam for worship. Later, when an attempt was made to shift the Lingam to

another place, it got stuck up (*Sikkuthal*) and could not be removed. Hence the place derived the name *Sikkal*. Before humbling Mahabali, the great King who was a devotee of Siva, Vishnu is said to have sought the blessings of Siva here. This legend accounts for the existence of Vishnu shrine by the side of the main shrine.

The sacred tank called Palkulam is behind the shrine. A bath here is considered by the faithful as health-giving.

The temple is administered by a Board of Trustees consisting of five members. An Executive Officer appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the day-to-day administration of the shrine.

KIVALUR

Sri Akshayalingaswamy Temple

This temple situated centrally in the village, has a lofty, five tiered gopuram with artistic plaster work. It is about a kilometre from Kizh Velur, or Kivalur railway station, which is on the Thanjavur-Nagore line. The temple is located on Thiruvarur-Nagore road, and is well served by buses. It is equi-distant (12 kilometres) from Thiruvarur and Nagore. The total population of this village is 2,551 according to the 1961 Census.

This temple was built by King Kochchenga Chola. It is one of the seventy-eight Mada Temples built by him. It is understood that the Maharashtra King Tuljaji had made endowments of lands to the temple and raised compound walls around the shrine. The temple has a copy of the document concerning this King's endowments. The sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity, Sri Akshayalingaswamy, a swayambu lingam, five feet high, is built by massive stones from top to bottom. The Lord in this temple is otherwise known in Tamil as

"*Kediliappar*". (The lord who frees one from harm). The Goddess of this temple is known as Sundarakujambal or Vanamulai Nayagi in Tamil. There is another sanctum wherein is installed the image of Goddess Anjuvattathambal. There are two prakarams in this temple and the whole temple is occupying 2·48 acres of land. The Sthala Viruksham of this temple is "Elanthai" Tree.

The festival deity of Katchi Kodutha Nayanar in this temple is popular. The Saivite Saints Appar and Thirugnana-sambandhar had sung hymns in praise of this temple. The following song sung by Thirunavukkarasar (Appar) reveals the fame of the Lord here:

"சொற்பாவும் பொருள்தெரிந்து தூய்மை நோக்கித்
தூங்காதார் மனத்திரூஉ வாங்கா தாஉ
நற்பான்மை அறியாத நாயி னேஉ
நன்னெறிக்கே செலும்வண்ணம் நல்கி ஞஉப்
பற்பாவும் வாயாரப் பாடி யாடிப்
பணிந்தெழுந்து குறைந்தடைந்தார் பாவம் போக்க
கிற்பாஉக் கீழ்வேளூ ராளுங் கோவைக்
கேடிலியை நாடுமவர் கேடி லாரே".

One of the musical trinities, Muthuswamy Dikshitar had sung songs in praise of this Lord. It is believed that the closed doors of this temple were opened on hearing his songs.

Six poojas are performed daily, by Saivite Brahmins, according to Karana Agama. They are being paid from the temple's revenue in cash and kind. The temple is having gold and silver jewels worth about Rs. 25,140. Most of them are antique. It also owns 930·36 acres of wet and 204·29 acres of dry lands in 23 villages. The annual income comes to about Rs. 43,900 from the above lands. It is utilised for the payment of salaries to staff, celebration of festivals and maintenance of the temple. A part of the income is being used for the midday meals scheme to feed about thirty poor students daily. The annual income through Hundi is about only Rs. 300 and through Archanas and Abishegams is about Rs. 100.

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5. Kodungai Vinayagar
6. Nandhi
7. Dwajasthambam
8. Balipeedam
9. Room
10. Madapalli
11. Balasubramaniar
12. Viswanathar
13. Sixty Three Nayanmars Mandapam
14. Sthalaviruksha Vinayagar
15. Agastheeswarar
16. Alunkoveswarar
17. Mahalakshmi
18. Brahatheeswarar
19. Chandikeswarar
20. Durgai
21. Jambukeswarar
22. Kailasanathar
23. Annamalainathar
24. Vanamulainayagi Ambal
25. Ekambareswarar
26. Choleeswaramudaiyar
27. Kuberar
28. Kalatheeswarar Sannathi
29. Kayaroganaswamy
30. Moovar Mandapam
31. Sabanayagar Mandapam
32. Anjuvattathambal Sannathi
33. Bairavar
34. Suriyar
35. Vasantha Mandapam
36. Yagasalai
37. Office Room
38. Raja Gopuram
39. Vinayagar
40. Sundara Vinayagar
41. Arumugaswamy

Some old vahanams (mounts) and a big car, made of Iluppai wood, are in this temple. Anjuvattathamman car festival in the month of Panguni, the annual Brahmothsavam in the month of Chithirai on Chithira Pournami and the Saptha Sthana palanquin festival in the month of Chithirai are the important festivals in this temple. The silver rishaba vahanam festival during the Brahmothsavam is also important.

The temple has legendary importance as well. Muruga is believed to have prayed to Lord Siva to wipe off his sin of having killed Surapadman. It is also said that Lord Natarajar gave darshan to Sage Agasthya here.

The significance of Natarajar image in the temple has been described as follows:

"The dancing image is very noteworthy. It has ten hands and in six of them it holds weapons like Soolam, Sword, Shield, Mazhu, Pasam and a stout piece of wood. All these weapons are held with great ease stressing His "Veera" aspect. The idol belongs to the Eighteenth Century A.D. and comes from a place near Tanjore. It is well-known that Sarfoji, King of Thanjavur, installed several idols associated with war and established a Mantralaya also. Probably this image could have been made under his direction".

This temple was previously managed by the kings who ruled over the region. At present, a Board of Trustees consisting of three members and an Executive Officer, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple.

There is a separate shrine for Kubera. Navagrahas are all in a row here. The idols of about eighteen important deities enshrined between Benares and Cape Comorin have been installed in the inner prakaram of this temple.

SEMBIANMADEVI

Sri Kailasanathaswamy Temple

This is situated at a distance of thirteen kilometres from Kivalur railway station on the Thiruvarur—Nagapattinam line. This is one of the important Saivite centres surrounded on all sides, by several sacred places like Thevur, Thirukkuvalai, Ettukudi, Valivalam, Sathiyakudi, Sikkal and Nagaikaronam. The village itself is named after the great Queen Sembianmadevi who was the mother of Uthama Chola and the Queen of Gandaraditya. She is stated to have built the temple of Kailasam Udaiyar or Kailasanathar in this village. The Queens (of whom as many as eight are mentioned) of her son Uthama made various gifts to this temple in memory. The dowager Queen was widowed early in life, when her son Uthama was too young to be crowned king. She became very religious and spent lavishly in renovating old and ruined temples, in building new temples and in making presents of lands, jewels, vessels etc., to them. Her charities extended throughout the Cholamandalam. Her benefactions gave a great impetus to the growth of temple architecture which exhibited itself fully during the time Raja Raja I and his son Rajendra Chola I. She was greatly venerated during her life time and deified after her death. An image of her was set up in the temple in this village in the year 1020.

The temple occupies roughly one acre and eighty-two cents and faces east. It has two prakarams with a Rajagopuram at the front entrance, which is known as *'Thirumaligai Thiruvayil'*. The entrance to the second prakaram is called *"Thiruthorana Vasal"*.

The presiding deity is known as Kailasanathaswamy and His divine consort as Brahannayagi (Peria Nayagi). In the stone inscriptions of the temple, the Lord is referred to as 'Sri Kailasamudaya Mahadevar'. The shrines of Somaskandhar, Natarajar, Dakshinamurthy, Chandeswarar, Viswanathar, Suryar, Bairavar etc., have been installed in the first prakaram while the sanctum of the divine consort of the Lord is

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11. *Dakshinamoorthy*
12. Parivaramoorthigal
13. Ardhanareeswarar
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22. Perianayagi Ambal (Uthsavar)
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32. Store Room
33. Sthalaviruksham & Rishi Mandapam
34. Madam

situated in the second prakaram with a compound wall all round. There is a separate sanctum for Subramaniar and a mandapam for Nandhi Deva in the second prakaram. There is also another mandapam named after Sembian Madevi, where it is said, the villagers used to congregate for taking decisions on matters of common interest.

The Sthala Viruksham is Banyan Tree and the sacred water of the temple is called Chathurveda Pushkarani.

The temple is rich in inscriptions which throw light on the piety of the rulers of the region of bygone days. There are as many as twenty-three stone inscriptions. They reveal that this village formed part of Arulmozhi Deva Vala Nad which is one of the nine Kutrams of the Chola Mandalam, that this village was named after the great Queen Sembiyan Madeviar and the temple of Sri Kailasanathaswamy was constructed by her and that the entire village was endowed for the benefit of the Brahmins who had mastered all the four Vedhas. It is also seen from the inscriptions that several charities were made in favour of this temple by the members of the royal family and that the Government had waived the collection of taxes on the lands endowed to the temple.

The temple owns 279·81 acres of wet and 115 acres of dry lands and the income from these lands, is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple. Several festivals are conducted in the temple of which the Brahmothsavam and the festival to commemorate the birth day of the Chola Queen Sembian Madevi in Chithirai month are the famous ones celebrated with great eclat. There are several wooden vahanams here, which are used to mount the Lord during festival occasions.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed an Executive Officer, besides a Board of Trustees, for looking after the affairs of the temple.

NAGAPATTINAM

1. Sri Meikandamoorthy Temple

This is a popular shrine dedicated to Lord Muruga in Nagapattinam Town. It is also known as Kumaran Koil.

It is understood that Anandarangam Pillai, the famous Dubash of the French Government built this temple in the year 1750 A. D. A devotee belonging to the Vaisya Community had renovated this temple and celebrated the Kumbabishegam in 1951. A new mandapam was also built in 1961 from the temple's funds. The temple faces east. It has two Gopurams, one on the eastern side (about forty feet high) and the other on the southern side (about forty-five feet high).

The presiding deity of this temple, known as Sri Meikandamoorthy is in a standing posture along with His consorts, in the sanctum sanctorum. The festival idol of Lord Muruga with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai is also kept here. A festival deity of Lord Arumugar, about one feet tall, with six faces, and twelve hands, on a peacock mount is also seen here. There are separate shrines for Kasi Viswanathar, Goddess Visalakshi, Saturn and other minor deities. The temple is occupying about thirty-one cents of land.

A special feature about this temple is that Kubera has been installed in a separate sanctum. No special significance is however, attached to this.

Five poojas are performed daily by a non-hereditary Saivite Brahmin. The temple owns gold, silver and gem-set jewels worth about Rs. 15,800. Most of them are new. The silver Angi, gold Kreedam, Padhakkam, Sakthi-Vel and Saya-Kondai deserve mention. Through the landed properties, the temple gets an annual income of Rs. 14,000. The temple owns some buildings and gets a monthly rent of about Rs. 300 from them. These amounts are being used for the payment of salary to staff and for the maintenance of the temple.

Brahmothsavam during Thai Poosam and Skandha Sashti are the important festivals of this temple. On Kirthigai days,

a special worship is made. Apart from a ratham, there are peacock, sooran and goat mounts here, which are used during festival times. About 2,000 persons congregate during the festival period.

There is a legend concerning this temple. About 200 years ago, there lived one Alagamuthu Pulavar, the son of a Commander to a King. He was an illiterate and was suffering from an incurable disease. He used to spend most of his time in the temple itself. After the Arthajama pooja, every day he was in the habit of taking 'Prasadham' and that was his only food. One day when he was suffering from severe pain, he slept in a corner of the room where the temple mounts were kept. The Brahmin priest who used to feed him found that he was missing. He later locked the temple and went away. At midnight, Lord Murugar came in the disguise of the priest, woke him up, gave him the Prasadham, and directed him to sing in praise of the Lord. When the temple was opened the next morning, Alagamuthu Pulavar was found hale and healthy. On account of the divine blessings, he was able to sing hundred verses on Lord Murugar. Then he visited several temples on a pilgrimage and at last came to Sirkali, where he attained the feet of the Lord, on the Chithirai Sadhayam day. Every year, on the Chithirai Sadhayam day, a festival is celebrated in commemoration of this. An image of Alagamuthu Pulavar has also been installed in the temple.

A Board of Trustees consisting of five members, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the temple's affairs.

2. Sri Kayaroganaswamy and Neelayadakshi Amman Temple

This is one of the important temples of Nagapattinam Town, popularly known as Neelayadakshiamman Temple or in short, Amman temple. It is centrally situated in the Port Town of Nagapattinam. The town is accessible by both bus and rail. The Municipality has a population of 57,864. The temple is about four kilometres away from the railway station.

Nagapattinam, which is called "Karonam" both in inscriptions and in the Periyapuranam was under Dutch possession between 1660 and 1781 A.D. before it went to the British.

This temple of antiquity is the eighty-second sthalam among the 127 Padal Petra Sthalams located on the southern bank of the Cauvery. The sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity, Sri Kayaroganaswamy, faces east and the Goddess, Neelayadakshi Amman, faces south. This is also considered as one of the seven sacred centres known as "Saptha Vidanga Sthalam." The Thiagaraja Lingam called Sundara Vidangar in the temple is of pure "*Gomethagam*". The shrine belongs to the Chola period. There are two prakarams in this temple.

The temple, enclosed by walls, is of rectangular shape. It occupies about 3·36 acres of land. The Goddess Neelayadakshi Amman is the popular deity of the temple. The place is also said to be one of the sixty-four Sakthi Peetams.

Inside the temple is a five-tiered gopuram called Chola Gopuram said to have been constructed by one of the Chola rulers of the region.

The sculptures in this temple are of the highest tradition and quality. The Nagabarana Vinayagar's idol at the entrance with a five headed serpent on the Thiruvachi is a fine piece of work and unique in nature. According to a legend, this Vinayagar was worshipped by the Serpent King Nagaraja. As noteworthy as the Nagabarana Vinayaga is the majestic Nandhi, the conventional vehicle of Lord Siva in front of the Swamy sannadhi. It is fairly a big Nandhi, though not as big as that of its counterpart in Thanjavur Temple. But unlike the latter, this is built of brick and mortar.

Among the numerous bronze and Panchaloga idols, the intricate workmanship of Panchamuga Vinayagar with five faces seated on a Lion is noteworthy. This is said to represent one of the sixteen forms of Vinayagar. Two other places where Panchamuga Vinayagar idols exist are Thiruvarur and Vedaranyam. Another evidence of fine artistic work in this

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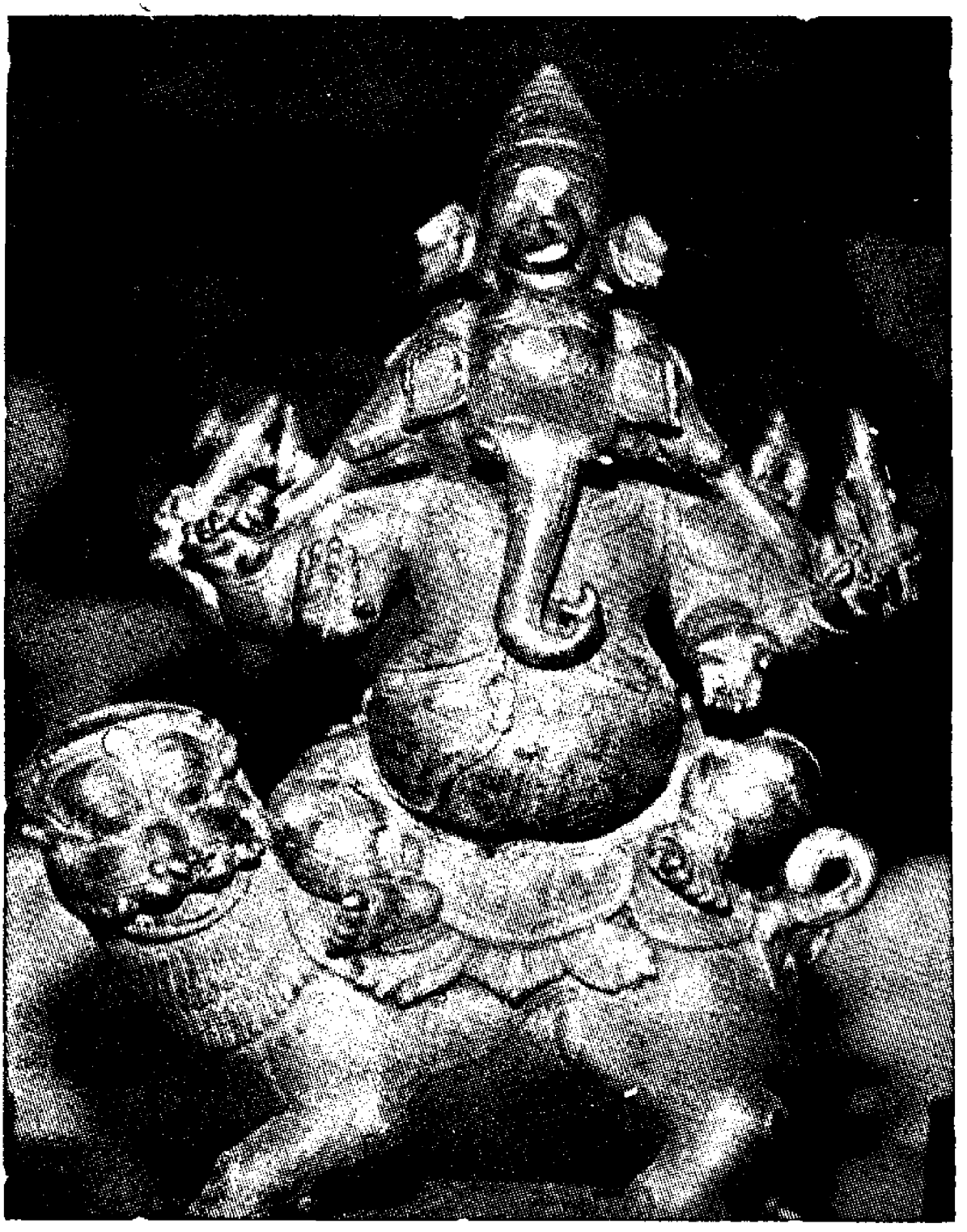
45. Pandhakatchi Mandapam
46. Pasumadam
47. Nandhi
48. Nagabarana Pillaiyar
49. Mukthi Mandapam with Deva Theertham
50. Front Mandapam



Sri Heramba Ganapathi
Sri Kayaroganeeswarar and
Neelayadakshi Amman Temple
Nagapattinam.

temple is the existence of an image of Sri Thyagarajar, made of stone, in the goshtam of Thyagaraja Sabha. The walls of the temple are decorated with exquisite carvings. The images of Lord Arumugar in the outer prakaram and the soldiers engraved on the pillars of the mandapam are life-like. The Nandhi in the Goddess's sanctum in a lying posture reveals the skill of the artisans in the past.

Poojas are performed six times a day. Offering prayers to the God at Arthajama Pooja is considered specially important. There is a separate endowment for this particular pooja.

The temple owns about 553·17 acres of wet and 46·05 acres of dry lands apart from vacant plots of 3·23 acres. The annual income that accrues from the above landed properties amounts to Rs. 61,000. There are silver, gold and precious stone ornaments worth about Rs. 1,29,000. All the ornaments are antique. Gold chest kavacham with strings and gold clothing for wearing below the waist are of good workmanship.

Adi Pooram festival in the month of Adi and Panchakrosam festival in the month of Ani are two of the important festivals. Adi pooram is celebrated as a big festival for ten days. On the tenth day, after the sacred bath, the idol of Goddess Neelaya-dakshi is taken in the artistic temple car supposed to be made of ceramic and glass. The other festival Panchakrosam is also celebrated on a grand scale here to commemorate the manifestation of Lord Siva in the wedding posture before Saliswara Maharaja. The Brahmothsavam of the temple takes place in Vaikasi.

There are about seven inscriptions in this temple, which reveal the following information; the death of an important person (in Dutch language), the finding of a bronze statue in a Jain Temple, the construction of this temple with the help of the then Governor Reynier Van Visingan in 1777 A.D., gifting Nagapattinam to the Dutch by the Thanjavur Nayak King Veeraraghava, and the foundation stone laid in 1774 A.D. to the old Dutch Christian temple (Church). The *District*

Gazetteer states that there are some other inscriptions also revealing the gift given by Raja Raja Chola I to build a Buddha Temple in Anaimangalam village and donations made to that temple by Kulothunga Chola. The huge court hall in front of the Dwajasthambam bears testimony to the antiquity of the shrine. The temple has been visited by many saints including Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar. The great Tamil Scholar Maha Vidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai has written a Sthala Puranam for this temple.

The place and this temple have interesting legendary back ground. The town came to be known as Nagapattinam since the serpent King Adhisesha worshipped the Lord here. Legend has it that Adhisesha gave his daughter in marriage to King Saleeswara, an ardent devotee of the Lord. The statue of King Saleeswara can be seen at the entrance to the Mahamandapam. One of the 63 Nayanmars called *Athipatha Nayanar* who belonged to the Fishermen community was born in this place. Even today members of the Fishermen community of this place enjoy the special privilege of placing the dead body of their members at the entrance of the temple and receiving flowers and holy water from the sanctum. A festival is also conducted in commemoration of the service of Sri Athipatha Nayanar every year, during the month of Avani.

Saint Sundaramurthy Swamigal, it is believed, prayed to the Lord of this temple and obtained presents of valuable gold jewels etc., from Lord Thyagarajar.

Saint Pundariha, it is said, entreated the Lord to give him 'Moksha' with his mortal body and it was granted. Because of this (Arohanam with *Kayam*) the deity of this temple came to be known as Kayarohanaswamy.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department and an Executive Officer appointed by them is managing the affairs of the temple.

3. Sri Soundararaja Perumal Temple

Centrally situated in the town and having a seven storeyed Rajagopuram, this is a famous Vaishnavite temple. It is about half a kilometre from the Nagapattinam railway station. This shrine faces east. The temple is said to have been constructed by Kulothunga Chola. Jagannatha Naydu popularly known as Jaggul Naydu who was a Minister to the Dutch rulers is said to have constructed the Rajagopuram with Dutch Government funds. He is also said to have endowed costly jewels to the temple. He was an ardent devotee of the Lord. One can see the statues of this gentleman and his wife in the prostrating form at the entrance to the Perumal sannadhi.

The temple has three prakarams and a beautiful Rajagopuram with plaster figures at the entrance.

The original Moolavar of Sri Soundararaja Perumal which was made of brick and mortar was replaced by a stone image in the year 1941 due to the efforts of a devotee by name Ramaswamy Pillai. About ten feet in height, the Moolavar, Sri Soundararaja Perumal, is in a standing posture with four hands-holding Sangu, Chakkaram, Gadha and Lotus. He looks majestic and enchanting. The ornamentation of his body is very elaborate. It appears that Thirumangai Alwar who composed several Padhigams on this Lord has rightly described Him as "*Azhagar*" and "*Nagarigar*". The two other kshetrams where he has praised the beauty of the Lord are *Kallazhagar* Temple in Madurai and Sri Ranganathar Temple in Srirangam.

After crossing the main entrance, one will reach the beautiful Vasanthamandapam. Opposite to this mandapam is temple tank called Sara Pushkarani whose water is considered sacred. There is a separate sanctum for Sri Ranganatha Perumal facing south. He is found lying on Adhisesha. The other deities of the temple are Sri Ramar and Sita, Srinivasa Perumal, Andal and Anjaneyar. The Yagasala is on the northern prakaram.

The sanctum of the Goddess—Soundravalli Thayar, is situated on the southern side of the prakaram. Among the various bronze idols, the image of Sri Narasimhar is noteworthy. It depicts the Lord as slaying Hiranya and at the same time blessing Prahladha. Unlike in other Vaishnavite centres, the Vimanam over the sanctum sanctorum of this temple has five kalasams, which is considered to be a rare feature.

The numerous stone pillars of the mandapams contain some artistic carvings. The idols of the Dwarapalakas at the entrance of the sannadhi are graceful.

Poojas are performed six times a day by hereditary Vaishnavite Brahmin priests. The temple owns jewels worth about Rs. 1,21,400. Mostly they are donated by the devotees and are antique. Most of the jewels are studded with costly red, green and diamond stones.

The temple has been endowed with a large extent of land. The annnal income from landed property is about Rs. 31,300. This amount is used for the celebration of festivals, performing daily poojas and for the maintenance of the temple. About Rs. 2,000 is also being spent towards midday meals scheme for the school children.

A car, forty feet high, a ratham twenty-five feet high and a gold coated palanquin are owned by the temple. Panguni Uthiram (Perumal festival), Ani Uthsavam (Thayar festival), Adi Pooram, Andal festival and Vaikunta Ekadhasi are the important festivals celebrated by the temple which are well attended.

There is an interesting legend about this shrine which runs thus : A prince of this part of the country had a daughter. She was good looking though actually she had an abnormal physique. The girl had three breasts instead of two. Her father, the ruler of the place, being anxious about her future, prayed to the God for help. The Lord blessed him that the third breast of the girl would disappear when her ordained husband met her. Her father sent her with royal attendants to discover her husband. After visiting many villages, towns and cities, her palanquin

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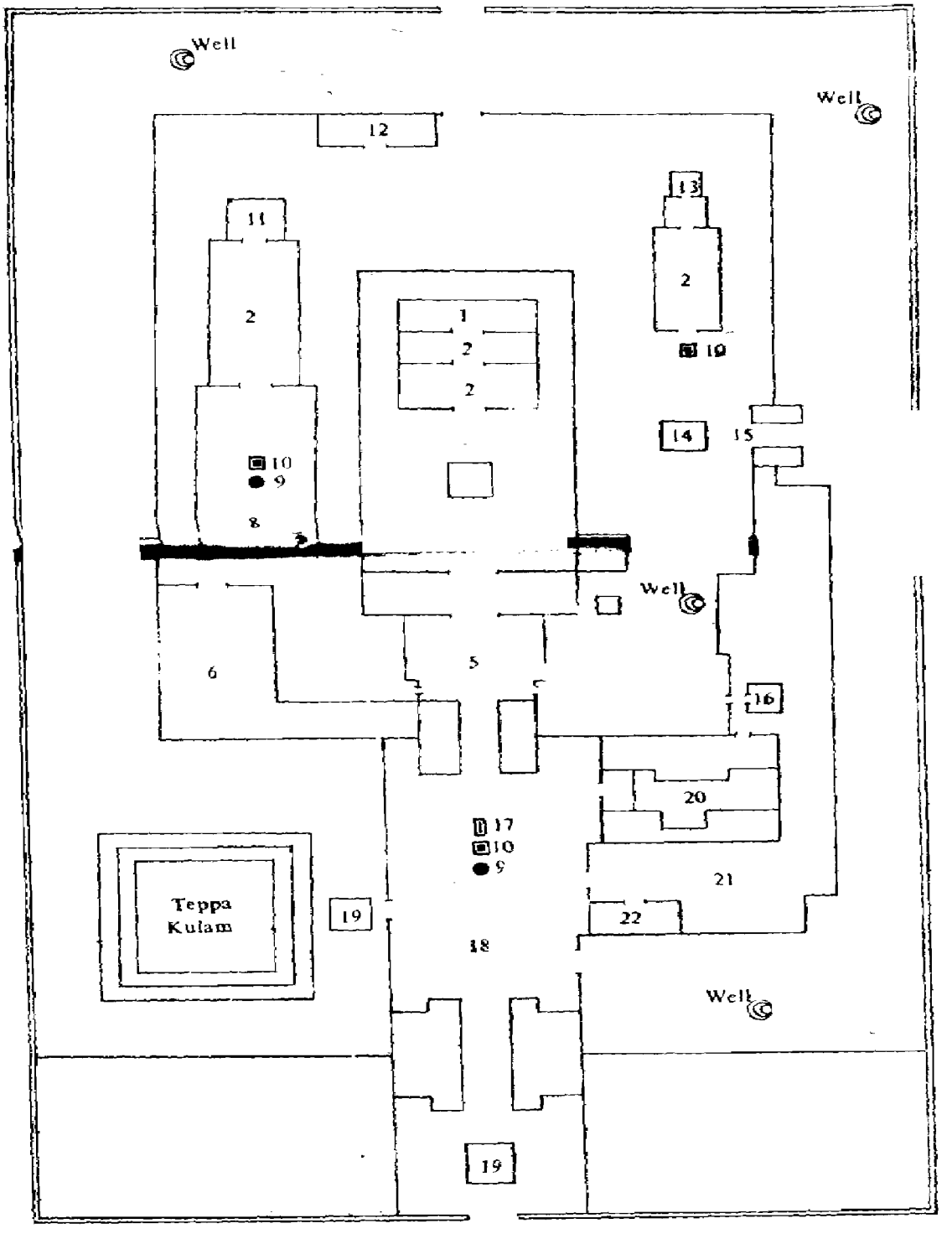
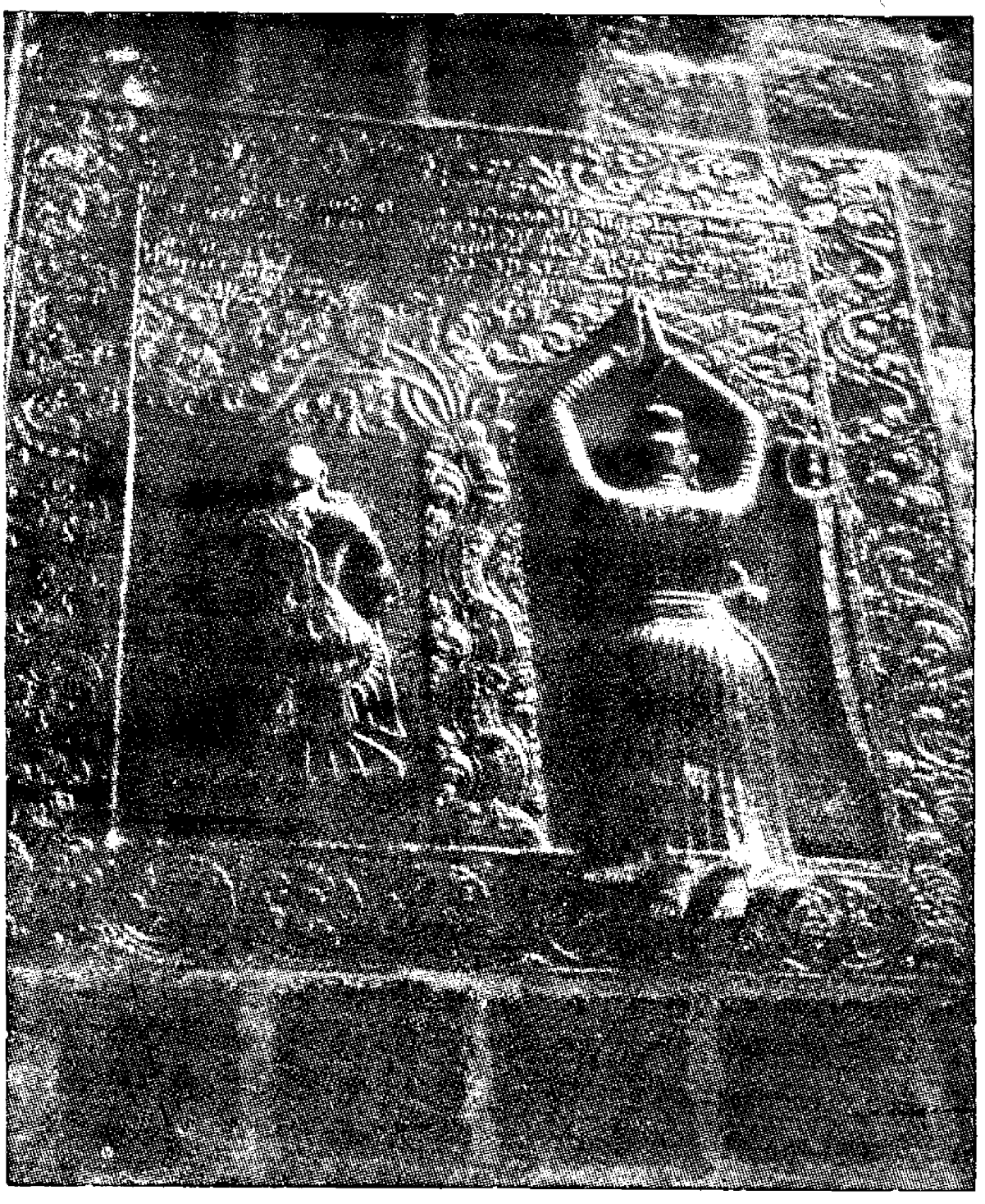
19. Four Pillared Mandapam
20. Azhwar Sannathi
21. Vasantha Mandapam
22. Devasthanam Office

SRI SOUNDARARAJA PERUMAL TEMPLE

NAGAPATTINAM

(Not to Scale)





Jaggulu Naidu and his wife, Images of who built
Sri Soundararajaperumal Temple
Nagapattinam.

arrived at the spot where we now find the temple of Soundara Raja Perumal. At that time Nagaraja was doing penance there near a tank called Sara Pushkarani. As soon as the princess saw him, her third breast disappeared. This gave the princess the sure indication that he was her husband. She then requested Nagaraja to marry her; she also joined him in his prayers to Lord Mahavishnu who appeared before them and gave darshan, in the reclining form i.e., *Sesha Sayanam* ; but they were not satisfied to see the Lord in a reclining pose. They prayed again and God then appeared in the sitting posture (*Padmasana*). The devotees were still not satisfied with this vision but continued their prayers till they saw him in standing posture. The God who was pleased with their perseverance and devotion, appeared in His full divine beauty as Lord Vishnu with four hands holding Sangu, Chakkara, Gadha and Lotus. Sri Soundara Raja Perumal is said to represent the form in which He appeared before the couple.

The place has been named after Nagaraja as Nagapattinam, because he got the blessings of Lord Vishnu here. Lord Vishnu is seen with His consort Sundaravalli Thayar. This is one of the 108 sacred places of the Vaishnavites.

This temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

KOVIL KADAMBANUR

H/O AGARAKKADAMBANUR

Sri Kailasanathaswamy Temple

This ancient temple is situated on the southern bank of the Cauvery in Kovil Kadambanur village. It is about five kilometres from Sikkal and Kivalur railway stations on the Thanjavur - Nagore line. Buses which are plying between Nagapattinam and Thiruvarur pass through this place. The total population of this village is about 2,141.

Sri Kailasanathaswamy, a Swayambu Lingam, is the presiding deity and Soundara Nayagi alias Azhagia Nayagi is the divine consort here. The temple occupies about ten cents of land. There is no Rajagopuram in this temple. The sancta of Sri Kailasanathaswamy and that of the Goddess have each a beautiful vimanam. The sanctum of the Goddess is facing south. It is situated on the northern side of the Maha-mandapam. All these mandapams are built of brick and mortar.

The images of the Goddess Soundara Nayagi and Murugar (known as Dhandapani) are very enchanting and life-like. Lord Murugar is in a standing posture facing north which is rather unusual, though the entrance to his sannadhi is from the east. Another place where Lord Murugar is facing north is Kivalur, at a distance of four miles from this temple.

Two poojas are daily performed. The temple owns about 1·41 acres of wet lands, 41·59 acres of dry lands and 5·30 acres of assigned lands. It gets an annual income of about Rs. 4,600 from them. There are some ancient wooden mounts. The wooden rishabam among them is an important one.

There are a number of holy theerthams around this temple, of which the Sivaganga Theertham in front of the temple is very important. It is believed that the water of this tank has wonderful therapeutic value. It will be appropriate to narrate a legend associated with this holy tank. Once a lame brahmin was longing to take a bath in the Ganges at Benares. He could not go to Benares being physically handicapped and so he came to this place and settled down to worship Sri Kailasanathaswamy with sincerity. One day he had a direction from the Lord in his dream asking him to take his bath in the Sivaganga Theertham, treating it as a bath taken in the Ganges. He carried out this direction and he felt fulfilled.

The temple which was originally attached to the Kivalur Akshayalingaswamy Devasthanam has now been brought under the control of Sikkal Singaravelar Devasthanam, for administrative convenience.

THIRUNEIPERU

Sri Vanmikanathaswamy Temple

Thiruneiperu, a village with a population of 2,004 (according to 1961 Census) is situated near Thiruthuraipoondi. The nearest railway station is Mangudi at a distance of one mile on the Mayuram-Thiruthuraipoondi line. Sekkizhar has mentioned about the beautiful surroundings of the village in his Periapuranam.

The village is also known as 'Thirumapathu' and 'Thiru Emaperur'. The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Vanmikanathar and His consort is Sri Uma Maheswari. The other sub-deities in the temple are Vinayagar, Subramaniar and Chandikeswarar. There are beautiful idols for 'Panchamurthis' and Sri Natarajar, all made of Panchalogam.

The temple occupies roughly an area of forty-seven cents. It is an ancient temple having been constructed during the time of Chola Kings. There is no gopuram at the front entrance and there is only one prakaram. It is said that the old '*Vowval-nethi*' mandapam (room with bats) which fell into disrepair, has now been renovated. Renovation of the temple was carried out and a Kumbabishegam was performed in April 1967.

Four poojas are performed every day. The temple possesses 314 rupees worth of antique jewels and a wooden rishaba vahanam. There are thirty-two acres of both wet and dry lands belonging to the temple and an annual income of Rs. 2,000 is derived from these lands.

This is said to be the birth place of Sri *Naminandhi-Adigal* who is one of the sixty-three Nayanmars. He was a keen devotee of Sri Thyagarajaswamy of Thiruvarur and also Sri Vanmikanathaswamy of this place. He is said to have spent his life rendering service to the temples by lighting lamps. One day he had no ghee for the lighting of lamps and it was time to light the lamps. As it was too late for him to go out and fetch ghee for the lights, he had no other alternative than to pray to God to excuse him for the lapse. At that

time he heard a divine voice asking him to fetch water from the temple tank and light the lights using the water instead of ghee. He complied with this direction immediately and the lights could be lit with the help of water.

Saint Appar had visited this place and sung in praise of the Lord and the place. He has referred to the above incident in one of his songs. The life history of Naminandhi Adigal has been depicted through pictures in the front mandapam of the temple. There is also a small shrine constructed for Naminandhi Adigal just opposite to Vanmikanathaswamy Temple on the eastern side of Thiruvarur-Thiruthuraipoondi road.

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department who have appointed Trustees for its management.

THIRUVALIVALAM

Sri Hirudaya Kamalanathar Temple

Thiruvalivalam is situated on the northern bank of Vellaiyar at a distance of eight kilometres to the east of Thirunellikaval railway station, on the Thiruvarur-Aranthangi railway line. The place can be reached by bus also. It is a small Panchayat having a population of 1,607 according to 1961 Census.

Thiruvalivalam is one of the 'Padal Petra Sthalams'. Saints Appar, Thirugnanasambandhar and Sundaramurthy Swamigal have visited this temple and sung hymns in praise of the Lord. It is said that Saint Arunagirinathar has also sung about the Lord of this place.

The exact age of the temple is not known, but from the design and manner of construction, it is presumed that it should have been built during the Chola period. The temple has been constructed on an artificial mound which is known as *'Mada Koil'*. History reveals that such structures were built

by the Chola King Kochchengannan and hence it is inferred that this temple should have been constructed by him.

There are several inscriptions in the temple relating to Thirteenth Century. Seven of them relate to the Chola period. They refer to the construction of a tank, certain gifts made to the temple and the forfeiture of certain lands belonging to individuals for acts of infidelity to Government. Two inscriptions relate to Pandya period which refer to sale of some lands and also gifts of certain lands made in favour of the temple.

The temple is situated on the north-western corner of the village facing east and roughly occupies an area of 1·80 acres. It has three prakarams, a Rajagopuram eighty-five feet high with three tiers and a beautiful garden. The temple is surrounded on three sides by a beautiful moat of one hundred and ninety feet width. The entrance to the temple is on the eastern side. The sanctum sanctorum has been carved out of a single stone. The front mandapam which had fallen into disrepair, has been renovated in 1938 and a Kumbabishegam performed.

The presiding deity Sri Hirudayakamalanathar (known as *Manathunainathar* in Tamil) is considered to confer on those, who even think of Him, all prosperity and peace and hence he is rightly called Manathunainathar. His divine consort is known as Mazhaiyun Kanniyar whose sanctum is located on the third prakaram. Just behind the sanctum sanctorum on the first prakaram, the idols of sixty-three Nayanmars and those of the nine *Thogai Adiars* are installed.

Six poojas are performed every day. The temple owns 340 acres of both wet and dry lands besides six houses. The lands have been leased out and the lease amount which is about Rs. 59,800 is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple besides conduct of the periodical festivals.

The moat around the temple rampart walls is called Chakkara Theertham which is considered sacred. There is a legend connected with the formation of this moat. It is said

that once Surya (Sun) came to this place to worship the Lord and deep furrows were left around the temple by the wheels of his chariot. The holy Punnai Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here.

Brahmothsavam in the Tamil month of Chithirai and Skandha Sashti are the important festivals conducted here. On the last day of the Brahmothsavam, a floating festival is conducted in the most (Chakkara Theertham).

The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

THIRUKKUVALAI

Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple

"Thirukkolili" is known as Thirukkuvalai. It is eleven kilometres east of Thirunellikaval railway station on the Thiruvarur - Aranthangi line. The place can easily be reached by bus from Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam. It is a Panchayat having a population of 2,061 according to 1961 Census.

The temple is noted for its inscriptions, fine architectures and sculptures. The inscriptions in this temple relate to the periods of Chola and Pandya Kings - Raja Rajan, Rajadhi Rajan, Kulothungan III, Rajendran III, Jata Varman Sundara Pandyan and Kulasekhara Pandyan. They refer mainly to the endowments of properties made for the various charities. An inscription relating to Raja Raja III discloses the information that an idol of Athipatha Nayanar was installed in the temple and necessary provision was made for the daily worship by one Alan alias Barathapan. Another inscription relating to the period of Sundara Pandyan reveals that there was a Vishnu temple in this place. This temple is now known as Varadaraja Perumal Temple. It is also known from another inscription that the second gopuram was constructed by one Thavalokanathan.

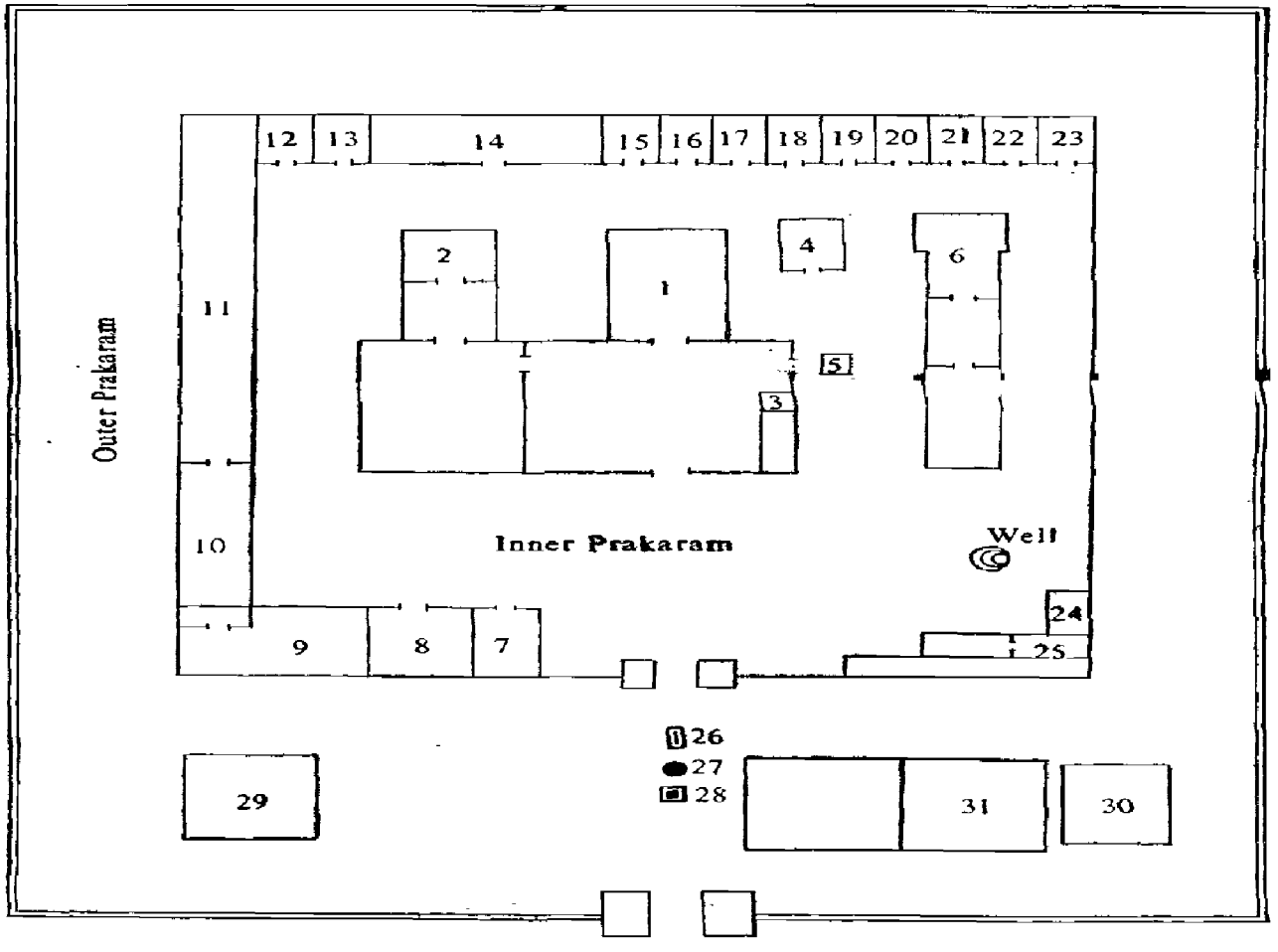
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

1. Brahmapureeswarar
2. Thyagarajaswamy
3. Shanmugar
4. Agasthyar
5. Chandikeswarar
6. Vandamar Poonguzhalal
7. Main Mandapam
8. Sundarar
9. Madapalli
10. Vessels Room
11. Thirumalaipathi
12. Vinayagar
13. Viswanathar
14. Vahana Godown
15. Visalakshi
16. Indralingam
17. Chandralingam
18. Subramaniar
19. Chockalingam
20. Annamalainathar
21. Nalvar
22. Vinaitheertha Vinayagar
23. Mahalakshmi
24. Navagrahas
25. Natarajar
26. Nandhi
27. Balipeedam
28. Dwajasthambam
29. Thattusuthi Mandapam
30. Yagasalai
31. Vasantha Mandapam.

SRI THYAGARAJASWAMY TEMPLE

THIRUKKUVALAI

(Not to Scale)



The temple which faces east roughly occupies an area of one acre and eighty cents. It has two prakarams and an imposing Rajagopuram at the entrance to the first prakaram. Opposite to the temple is the temple tank called Brahma Theertham. This lovely tank with Coconut Trees around it provides a picturesque scene. On the northern side of the first prakaram there is a mandapam known as Vasanthamandapam. At the entrance to the second prakaram, there is another tower, after crossing which one enters the Swami sannadhi. The Lord is known as Brahmapureeswarar. The Goddess goes by the name of Vandamar Poonguzhalal. On the southern side of the Swamy sannadhi is the sannadhi of Thyagesar and opposite to the Thyagesar sannadhi to the east of the first prakaram is the festival idol of Sundarar with his wife Paravai Nachiyar. On the south-western side of the prakaram is the sannadhi of Thyagar, Vinayagar and adjoining this, there is a separate sanctum for Subramaniar. Various sub-deities like Kasi Viswanathar, Chandikeswarar and Dakshinamurthy are also installed in a row in this prakaram. The images of the four Saivite saints have also been installed. The Amman temple is facing east and there is a separate prakaram.

According to the Sthala Puranam, the Navagrahas were absolved of their sins here and consequently they have no evil influence.

In this temple, according to tradition, Brahma offered worship and so the Lord came to be called Brahmapureeswarar. This is one of the seven Saptha Vidanga Sthalams. The idol of Thyagesar is one of exquisite beauty. The Thyaga Vidanga Lingam is made of Maragatham. It is believed to have been secured by Emperor Musukundha from Devendra. Vinayagar here is Thyaga Vinayaga and Murugar is Sundara Vadivelar.

This temple houses many interesting pieces of sculpture. On the walls of the southern side of the outer prakaram of the temple, one could see the depiction of Brahma and the Pandavas worshipping Siva. On the outer wall of the sanctum sanctorum could be seen the images of Bikshadanar, Narthana Vinayagar, Natarajar, Arthanareeswarar as well as Mahavishnu

with Conch and the Disc. They are images cut out of stones no doubt, but stones that throb with life. A great line of worshippers like Indra, Agasthya, Musukundha and King Omakanta is said to have found solace while offering worship here.

There are some excellent bronze images of Kalyana Sundarar, Saturn, Sundara Vadivelar with his consorts, Avani Vidanga Thyagarajar and others.

Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have sung in praise of the Lord here. Some unknown persons have sung a series of verses known as "*Thirukkolili Nathar Ula*". King Musukundha who installed the Vidangars in the seven Vidanga Kshetrams, had also composed thousands of *'Namavalis'* on God Thyagaraja.

The temple is under the control of the Adheenakartha of the Dharmapura Adheenam who is the Hereditary Trustee of the temple. A Superintendent appointed by the Adheenakartha is looking after the affairs of the temple.

The temple owns modern jewels worth Rs. 50,200 and about 1,300 acres of both wet and dry lands. The annual income is estimated at about Rs. 1,39,800 which is utilised for the general maintenance and upkeep of the temple, besides conduct of the festivals.

There are a number of wooden vahanas which are used to mount the God during festivals. Of the several festivals conducted in the temple, Brahmothsavam and Visaka Uthsavam are important festivals.

The important festivals conducted in the temple are Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi and Magam festival in Masi. During the latter festival, the miracle played by Sri Sundaramurthy Swamigal is enacted. It is said that Sri Sundaramurthy Swamigal had a very large stock of grains to be carried to Thiruvarur, a nearby village. As he found it impossible to remove the stock by manual labour, he had to pray to Lord Siva of this place for help as follows.

நீள நினைந்தடியேன் உமை நித்தலும் கைதொழுவேன்
வாளன கண்மடவாள் அவள் வாடி வருந்தாமே
கோளிலி எம்பெருமான் குண்டையூர்ச்சில நெல்லுப் பெற்றேன்
ஆளிலை எம்பெருமான் அவை அட்டித் தரப்பனியே.

The prayer was so appealing that the God became pleased and ordered his attendants (Demons) to carry the grains.

ETTUKUDI

Sri Subramaniaswamy Temple

The ancient and popular temple dedicated to Lord Subramaniar is well known in this part of the country as a place of pilgrimage. It is situated about twenty-five kilometres south west of Nagapattinam. Ammanur is the nearest railway station on Thiruvarur-Thiruthuraipoondi line. Buses are plying from Thiruvarur, Thiruthuraipoondi and Nagapattinam, through this village. The population of this place is 1,407 according to 1961 Census.

It is understood that this temple was built about five hundred years ago. It occupies about 1·15 acres of land. Just opposite to the temple, there is a beautiful tank called Saravana Poigai. The temple has a gopuram fifty feet high, and one prakaram.

The presiding deity Lord Muruga, with six heads and twelve hands is seated on a peacock mount in the temple. The height of the image is about 5·5 feet. The images of Lord Muruga in Engan, Sikkal and Ettukudi are said to have been made by one and the same sculptor.

The Siva Lingam enshrined in this temple is called Sri Soundareswarar and His Consort is known as Anandhavalli.

There is a separate sannadhi for Sage Valmiki on the southern prakaram just opposite to the Goddess's shrine. The holy Vanni Tree is the Sthala Viruksham of this temple.

It is said that Saint Arunagirinathar had paid a visit to this holy temple and sung hymns in praise of Lord Muruga.

Six poojas are performed daily by hereditary Saivite Brahmins. The temple is having gold and silver jewels worth about Rs. 55,700. All are antique. Most of them were donated by devotees as gifts. The gold arrow, and the silver Kavacham are important among the jewels.

The temple owns about 150 acres of wet and dry lands in Ettukudi, Korukkai, Senthamaraikan and Valakkarai villages. The temple gets about Rs. 55,200 annually through the lease of these lands. The temple also gets an annual income of about Rs. 12,000 through its Hundi collections and about Rs. 20,000 through the sale of Archana, and Abishega tickets. The Hundies are opened thrice a year, under the supervision of Trustees.

Silver plated rishabam, ram and peacock are the popular mounts here, apart from a ratham and a wooden palanquin. The major festival of this temple is celebrated for eighteen days in the month of Chithirai. During this festival, devotees who had taken a vow carry *Kavadis* on their shoulders to propitiate the Lord. A large number of Abishegams and Archanas are performed to the deity on behalf of the devotees. About two lakhs of people congregate at this place during the festival.

Lord Muruga here is considered powerful. Bathing of the deity with holy ashes, known as *Vibuthi Abishegam*, is a feature here as in Palani and other places and in that form the Lord is very captivating.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

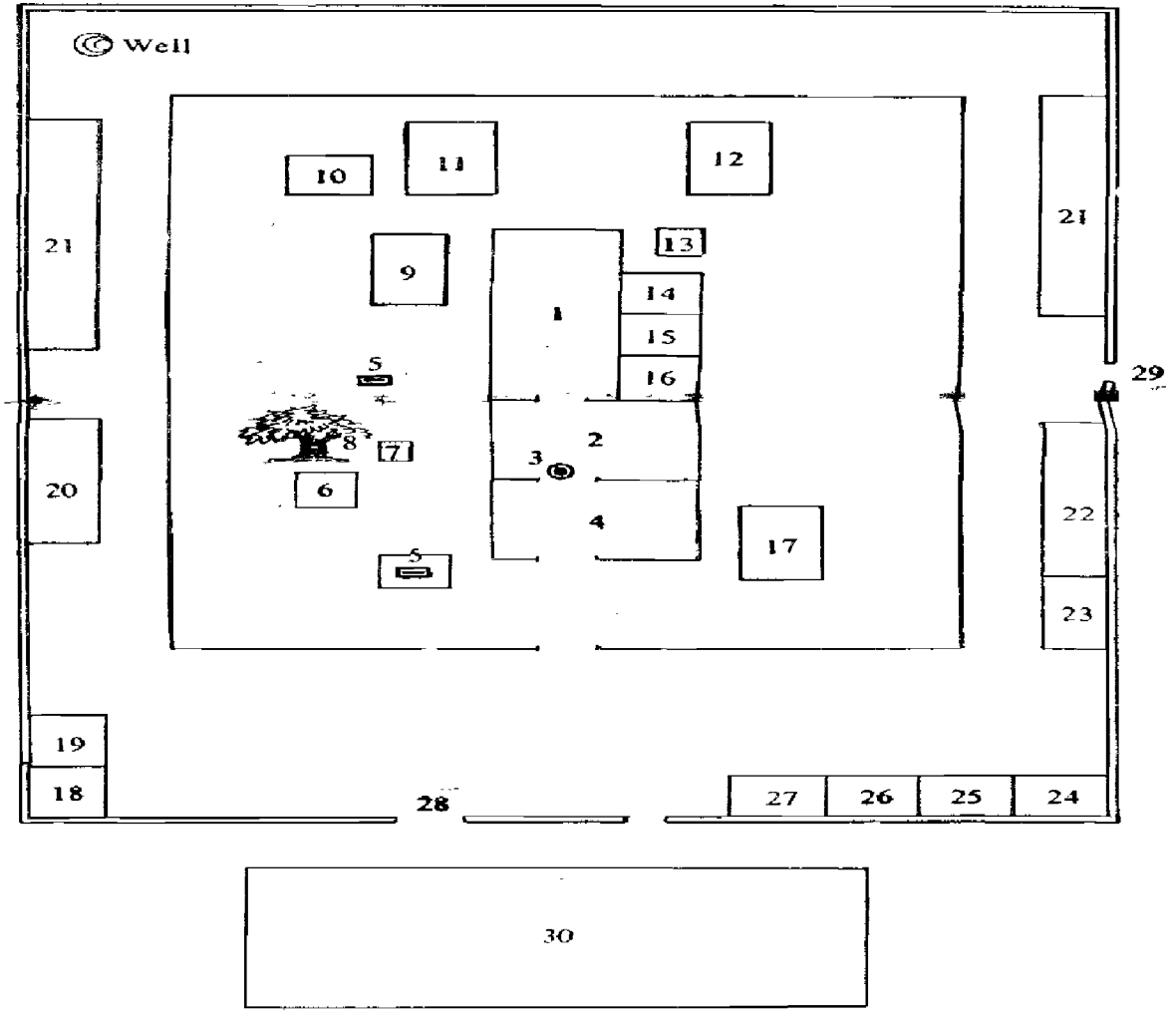
INDEX TO NUMBERS IN THE SKETCH

1. Subramaniaswamy (Moolavar)
2. Maha Mandapam
3. Peacock
4. Kalyana Mandapam
5. Nandhi
6. Sidhi Vinayagar
7. Valmeegi Samadhi
8. *Sthalaviruksham*
9. Swamy Sannathi
10. Vinayagar
11. Maha Vishnu
12. Mahalakshmi
13. Chandikeswarar
14. Arumuga Velar
15. Natarajar
16. Singara Velar
17. Ambal Sannathi
18. Ugrananam
19. Madapalli
20. Nava Veerargal
21. *Thirumalaipathi*
22. Vahana Godown
23. Devasthanam Office
24. Yagasalai
25. Navagrahas
26. Sani Bhagavan
27. Suriyan, Chandran & Bairavar
28. Front Entrance
29. Northern Entrance
30. Thirukkulam

SRI SUBRAMANIASWAMY TEMPLE

ETTUKUDI

(Not to Scale)



THIRUVOIMUR

Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple

Of the 127 sacred Sivasthalams on the southern bank of the river Cauvery, which have been visited by Saints and praised in their immortal verses, Thirvoimur is one. It is situated on the Nagapattinam—Thiruthuraipoondi bus route. This place can also be reached by bus from Thiruvarur. Just a mile away from this ancient Saivite shrine is the famous temple of Lord Muruga at Ettukudi.

This famous temple of Voimur Nathar is situated centrally in the village. There are several ancient and interesting stone inscriptions here, which are very informative. Thiruvoimur is a Panchayat having a population of 1,294 (652 males and 642 females) according to the 1961 Census.

The temple which faces east, has a single prakaram and is crowned by a picturesque Rajagopuram at the entrance. Opposite to the temple, there is a sacred tank called Surya Pushkarani. The area of the temple is about two acres. This place is one of the seven "Vidanga" sthalams. The Lord is known as "Neela Vidanga Thyagar" and the dance of Thyagaraja of this place is known as "*Kamala Nadanam.*" Lord Thyagaraja, His Consort Nilothpalambigai is enshrined in a separate shrine. In the first prakaram beyond the Rajagopuram, there is a sannadhi for Lord Nataraja in '*Madya Thandavam*' pose, with His Consort Sivakama Sundari. Adjacent to this are seen the Navagrahas in one row. Another noteworthy feature here is that there are as many as four images of Lord Bairavar.

The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Voimur Nathar (a Swayambu Lingam). His divine consort known as Goddess '*Palinum Nanmozhiyal*' is situated in a separate shrine on the northern prakaram. It is said that the Lord of this shrine was worshipped by the Sun God and hence the rays of the Sun fall over the Lingam in the sanctum on the twelfth and thirteenth days in the Tamil month of Panguni (March-April). To the

north of the sanctum is the shrine for Sri Vedharanyeswarar and on the south is the one for Thyagar, where one can worship Appar and Sambandhar also. The idol of Karaikkal Ammaiyar is a work of art. The idol in its standing pose truly reflects the form which the Ammaiyar assumed voluntarily so that she could pursue the true path of devotion.

In the prakaram, there are small shrines for Vinayagar and Murugar. The image of Dakshinamurthy on the southern prakaram seated on the rishabam is of good workmanship. This Rishaba Dakshinamurthy is found only a in few temples.

Saints Appar and Sambandhar have composed verses in praise of Lord Voimur Nathar. Appar particularly refers to the presiding deity as one, who could cure all ills.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin Gurukkals. The ancient jewels of the temple in gold and silver are worth about Rs. 35,700. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 965·66 acres of both wet and dry lands, which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 50,400 by way of rent. There are two rishabams and a horse vahanam here, apart from a ratham and a palanquin, all made of wood. Of the several festivals celebrated here, the eighteenth day Vasanthothsavam in the month of Vaikasi (May-June) is the most popular one, when a large number of devotees from far and near congregate.

This ancient shrine has a rich legendary background. According to a legend, when Saint Appar was sleeping at Vedharanyam after worship, the Lord appeared in his dream and asked him to proceed to Thiruvoimur, to have His darshan. Accordingly, Appar proceeded to Thiruvoimur. Saint Sambandhar also followed Appar and both had darchan of Lord Siva in this place. Sekkizhar refers to this episode in his "Peria Puranam". There is a sannadhi inside the temple for Vedharanyeswarar which bears testimony to the fact that the Lord from Vedharanyam came to this place leading Appar.

Karaikkal Ammaiyar
Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple
Thiruvoimur.

The affairs of this shrine are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of trustees consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

A brief account of other temples in the taluk is given below:

Perumkadambanur, ten kilometres from Nagapattinam has a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Chadurvedhapureeswarar. The temple was built during the Chola period. The presiding deity Sri Chadurvedhapureeswarar otherwise known as Nanoothi-nayagar is said to fulfil the prayers of His devotees. According to a legend Muruga is said to have worshipped Lord Siva at this place to get rid of the sin that attached to him since He killed Padmasuran. Hence Muruga is also famous in this temple. The temple requires extensive renovation.

Sri Naganathaswamy Temple in Nagore was also constructed by the Chola Kings. There is a beautiful Rajagopuram with three tiers, two prakarams, Arthamandapam. Maha-mandapam and sanctum sanctorum. Sri Veerabadrar's shrine in Nagapattinam is also important. Legend has it that Sri Veerabadrar performed a severe penance here invoking the sympathy of Lord Siva and got rid of his sin.

Athipuliyur is at a distance of sixteen kilometres from Nagapattinam. This contains a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Chidambareswarar. This is a very ancient temple. This place is called Dakshina Chidambaram as the temple here, as well as the presiding deity are facing south. The legend of this place goes to say that Lord Siva gave darshan to Sage Agasthya in wedding guise.

In Puravacheri, seven kilometres from Nagapattinam, there is a Perumal temple. The presiding deity Sri Rama-badraswamy with Lakshmana, Sita and Anjaneyar are all in

standing posture. The deity of this place represents Lord vishnu's incarnation as Sri Rama. Saint Thirumangai Alwar had visited this temple and sung in praise of the God. There is a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Viswanathaswamy and Visalakshi Ambal in Kutramporuthan Iruppu, a hamlet of Puravacheri.

Sri Angala Parameswari Amman Temple in Thirukkuvalai is a small shrine situated near Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple. This is a village shrine established by the villagers themselves about hundred years ago. The deity is considered very powerful in that, She fulfils the desires of Her devotees without fail. The local ryots have immense faith in Her ; they offer poojas to Her before celebrating marriages and commencing agricultural operations. Recently, the temple has been renovated and a Kumbabishegam was performed.

Sri Rudrapureeswara Swamy Temple in Puthur, hamlet of Andarapettai, Sri Devapureeswaraswamy Temple in Thevur, Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple in Thirukaravasal and Sri Nedutharinathaswamy Temple in Kolikannappu are all Padal-Petra Sthalams. Sri Devapureeswaraswamy Temple is a 'Mada-koil' supposed to have been constructed by the Chola King Kochchengannan. It has a Rajagopuram of fifty-five feet high with three tiers. There are also informative stone inscriptions here. The famous Saints Appar, Sambandhar, Manickavasagar and Ramalingaswamigal have sung in praise of this Lord. This temple has got 221 acres of wet and 84 acres of dry lands through which an annual income of about Rs. 49,700 is derived.

Anaimangalam is of epigraphical interest as it is referred to in what is known as the large Leyden Grant, so called because it is kept in the Leyden Museum. The Grant was issued by Rajendra Chola I and records the gift of this village by Raja Raja I in the twenty-third year of his reign to the Chudamani Padmavihara at Nagapattinam built by a Prince of Burma who was Raja Raja's feudatory. A smaller Leyden Grant also records the grant of some land in this and certain other villages to the same Vihara.

THIRUTHURAIPOONDI TALUK

KACHANAM

Sri Kaichinneswaraswamy Temple

In the heart of Kachanam, a village about eleven kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi is situated the temple of Sri Kaichinneswarar with its beautiful Rajagopuram and artistic vimanams. This Sivasthalam, popularly known as Thirukkaichinnam has been classified as the one hundred and twenty second Saivite shrine on the southern bank of the river Cauvery. The temple though small is an ancient one.

Kachanam is linked with several centres by bus and train, the nearest railway station being Ammanur at a distance of about two kilometres. It is a small Panchayat having a population of 1,710 (866 males and 844 females) according to the 1961 Census.

The temple which faces east has two prakarams. It covers an area about 0·48 acre. The presiding deity, Sri Kaichinneswaraswamy is a Swayambu Lingam here. The shrine of His divine consort, Velvalai Nayagi Amman faces west. Both the shrines of the God and the Goddess are picturesquely crowned with attractive vimanams. There is a three-tier Rajagopuram at the entrance to the shrine. There are two tanks known as Vajra Theertham and Indra Theertham on either side of the temple. The mandapam beyond the Rajagopuram is on a slightly higher level and this temple is one of the several 'Mada Koils' of the south. In the corridor one

finds the artistic idols of Sri Arthanareeswarar and Sri Dakshinamurthy. In particular, Sri Dakshinamurthy is shown with a bull, an unusual feature.

There are eleven stone inscriptions which speak about the endowments made by Kings to this shrine. The temple has been renovated from time to time and a Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1959. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar visited this shrine and sung the praise of the presiding deity in about eleven verses.

Poojas are performed five times daily. The landed-properties of the temple comprise about 265 acres of wet and 44 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 42,300 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its upkeep and general maintenance.

Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi (May-June), Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Thiruvadhirai and Panguni Uthiram are the regular festivals celebrated here every year, of which the Vaikasi Brahmothsavam which spreads over a period of ten days is the most important one. Large number of devotees from far and near attend this festival. Besides these festivals, devotees also gather in large numbers during the monthly Pradhosham and Kirthigai to have a sacred darshan of the Lord.

This shrine has a legendary background. According to the Sthalapuranam, this place was originally known as Gonguvanam. Indra founded the sacred tank and installed the Lingam for worship. With the blessings of God, Indra was relieved of a curse inflicted on him by Sage Gouthama. When Indra tried to remove the Lingam, it got stuck up and his finger prints were left over the Lingam. Hence this Sthalam came to be known as "*Tiru-Kai-Chinnam*" (Hand impression) and the presiding deity as Tirukaichinna Nathar. The finger prints believed to be those of Indra can be seen over the Lingam even today.

The temple is under the management of the Madurai Thirugnanasambandhar Adheenam and a single Hereditary Trustee is in charge of its affairs.

KOVILUR

H/O VADAGADU

Sri Manthrapureeswaraswamy Temple

Kovilur is noted for its one-thousand year old Siva temple dedicated to Manthrapureeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. It is situated at a distance of about two kilometres north of Muthupet railway station. Muthupet is on the Mayuram-Karaikudi branch of the Southern Railway. This sacred Saivite shrine is situated in sylvan surroundings. There are a number of stone inscriptions on the walls of the temple.

Kovilur is a hamlet of Vadagadu Panchayat which has a population of 1,006 (507 males and 499 females) according to the 1961 Census. The temple which faces east has two prakarams. It is surrounded by broad car streets on all its four sides. The temple covers an area of about 2·17 acres. It is said that it was built by a Chola King. It was renovated from time to time and a Kumbabishegam was performed last in the year 1947. The entrance to the temple is crowned by a picturesque five tiered Rajagopuram. There are two sancta and two vimanams with plaster figures apart from an Artha-mandapam, a Sabahmandapam and a Vasanthamandapam. The inscriptions reveal that gifts were made to the temple for the prosperity of Raja Raja-III and for the victory of Prince Irunkolar. They also show that the worship of the Thevaram Saints had become common even in Chola times.

The upper portion of the Swayambu Lingam here is milky white, while its bottom is black in colour as usual. This is a rare feature which cannot be found in other Siva temples. He is slightly inclined towards the north, a pose which is

supposed to suggest to the worshippers that He is doing Manthra-Upadesa or teaching of Manthra to Sri Rama. His divine consort known as Periyanayagi is situated in a separate shrine facing south. Adjacent to Her shrine is a three tiered gopuram known as "Kattai-gopuram" and "Singala gopuram" bearing beautiful images of Sri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and others. Sri Sudhavana Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Kasi Viswanathar, Visalakshi, Suryar, Chandran, Bairavar, Arubathumoovar and Chandikeswarar are the other sub-deities here. There are also several festival idols. Of these, the idol of Sri Adhi Sesha holding a Sivalingam on his hand is worth mentioning. The Mango Tree is the Sthala Viruksham of this temple. Saint Thirugnanasambandhar visited this shrine and composed several sacred "Padhigams" (verses) in praise of the Lord.

Poojas are performed four times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin Gurukkals according to the principles of Siva Agamam and Karana Agamam. The temple owns modern jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 13,200. Of these, the gold "Kasu Malai" and the stone studded Mango Necklace of the Goddess deserve special mention. The immovable properties of the temple comprise about 2,400 acres of both wet and dry lands apart from several vacant plots and a grove which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 96,300 by way of rent. This amount is spent for the upkeep and general maintenance of the temple. The temple is running a Vedha Padasala and an Agama Padasala for educating poor children on religious lines. The annual Hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 500 while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 100 per annum. There is an ancient car (Ther) here, apart from a rishabam and a boodha vahanam, all made of wood.

Chithirai Brahmothsavam, Ani Thirumanjanam, Adi Pooram, Avani Moolam, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Thiruvadhirai and Karthigai Deepam are the regular annual festivals celebrated by the temple. Of these, the ten day Brahmothsavam in Chithirai (April-May) and Thiruvadhirai are the most important festivals celebrated with great enthusiasm when about ten thousand devotees from far and near congregate.

This shrine is steeped in rich legendary lore. It is stated that Sri Rama visited this shrine and received Manthra Upadesam from the Lord before waging a war with Ravana of Lanka. There is also an interesting story according to which *Vainadheya* (Garuda), son of Vindhai after conquerring Devendra, was flying over this sthalam on his way to Nagaloga with the Amirtham (Nectar) in order to release his mother. Few drops of the nectar fell on the Lingam. At once the Lingam turned milky white in colour and also several Mango plants sprouted from the ground. From then onwards this sthalam came to be known as "Amudha Suthavanam". It is also said that Saint Markandeyar, Varuna Deva and others had worshipped the Lord and attained eternal bliss.

An Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are in charge of the temple.

INSCRIPTIONS

The following Kings are referred to in inscriptions :

Raja Raja II (1146-1163 A.D.)
Rajendra II
Kulothunga III (1178-1218 A.D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A.D.)
Rajendra III (1246-1279 A.D.)
Jatavarman Sundara Pandya
Maravarman Pandya

THE VILLAGE : The village is referred to as Usathanam alias Keralakulasani Chaturvedimangalam, a Brahmadeya in Purankarambai Nadu, a sub-division of Rajendra Chola Vala Nadu.

DEITY : The main deity is called Usathanamudaiya Nayanar.

STRUCTURES : The mandapam and the prakaram are to be assigned to the Twelfth Century A. D. as they bear inscriptions of Raja Raja and others.

GIFTS : In the tenth year of Rajendra III, the gift of land for offerings to the shrines of Pillaiyar Ganapathy and Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar are recorded. A certain Ponnambala Koothan alias Irumudi Chola Pallavaraiyan built the shrine of Buvanapathi Nachiyar in the temple and the dancing girls of the temple entered into an agreement to burn a perpetual lamp in the shrine in the reign of Rajendra Chola III. In the next year of the same King lands were gifted by the residents of Mummudicholapuram to the same image. Further gifts of money and paddy were made to the same shrine in the fifth year of the same ruler. In the thirtieth year of Raja Raja III lands were gifted to the shrine of Subramanya by the assembly of Peruvazhvu Thantha Perumal Chaturvedimangalam. A certain prince Purosaikkudaiyar built the shrine of Thirukkamakottamudaiya Peria Nachiyar (the Amman shrine) in the twentieth year of Raja Raja III and gifted lands for the health of the king and for the victory of prince Irunkolar. During the tenth year of the same King taxes collected on temple lands were assigned for the repairs of the temple by the village assembly. During the eleventh year of the same King the shrine of Surya Deva in the temple of Usathanam is referred to. A certain Sokka Nayan alias Rajagambira Chola Araiyan ordered the gift of land for the worship and repairs of the temple for the Odhuvars in the Thirukkaikottai of the temple. A certain Vanarayan alias Chola Araiyan ordered the gift of land for offerings to the image of Pallavan Madevi Iswaramudaiya Nayanar in the twelfth year of Rajendra III. A certain Matha called Vanarayan Matha is said to have existed in the temple during the same period. A certain Pichan Pallavaraiyan alias Chola Araiyan, a native of Payyur is said to have set up an image of Pallavaneswaramudaiya Nayanar in the temple in the eighth year of Raja Raja III. During the twenty-eighth year of Rajendra Chola, a merchant of Mummudicholapuram set up an image of Thirugnanam Petra Pillaiyar in the temple. An image of Ganapathy called Nambi Vinayaga Pillaiyar received worship during the twelfth year of

Jatavarman Sundara Pandya. A certain Paripoorna Sivacharyar belonging to the Thiruchchathimutrathu Mudaliar Sandanam (lineage) presided over the Koothadum Nayanar Matha in the temple in the nineteenth year of probably the king whose name is not mentioned. A certain Isana Sivacharyar belonging to the same lineage set up an image of Alagiya Tiruchchitrambalamudaiya Nayanar in the temple. During the second year of Sundara Pandya, a certain Raja Narayana Vizhuparayan gifted a grove and a mandapam.

THILLAIVILAGAM

Sri Veera Kothandarama Perumal Temple

Situated at a distance of about twenty kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi, Thillaivilagam stands out as a prominent place. It has a population of 5,087 according to 1961 Census. It is on the Thiruthuraipoondi–Pattukkottai bus route. Built in 1913 to enshrine Lord Veerakothandarama with Goddess Sita, Lakshmana and Hanumar the temple attracts a large number of devotees of Sri Rama.

This is a small temple over an area of about sixty cents. The presiding deity Sri Veera Kothandarama, Goddess Sita, Lakshmana and Hanumar are all made of Panchalogam having been unearthed in 1862. The idol of Sri Veera Kothandarama, about 4·5 feet height holding a bow in his left hand and an arrow on his right hand is very enchanting, majestic and life-like. Veera Kothandarama is thus the depiction of the Prince of Ayodhya as the hero of unparalleled prowess.

The workmanship is so intricate that even the veins are indicated. The sculptural delineation of the image is so natural that one can see on the left knee of the idol of the *'Rakshai'* tied round, one or two small patches appearing like scars. The images of Goddess Sita and Lakshmana are about four feet in height and that of Hanumar is three feet in height and they are also equally artistic. Despite the fact that they have

been buried for a long time, they seem to retain their original beauty.

After unearthing these idols in the year 1862, the temple was constructed at the same place where they were found in the year 1910 due to the efforts of one Sri Gopalakrishna Iyer of Lalgudi. A Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1913.

The temple is facing east and it has two prakarams. Besides the sanctum sanctorum, there are Arthamandapam, Mahamandapam and Sobanamandapam. An idol of Sri Garuda has been installed opposite to the Moolavar in the Sobanamandapam. The vimanam over the sanctum sanctorum is called Anandha Vimanam.

Four poojas are performed daily following the Vaikanasa Agama system and the affairs of the temple are managed by a Hereditary Trustee under the administrative control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

A peculiar feature about this temple is that immediately to the north of it, is the temple of Sri Natarajar facing south having its entrance from the northern prakaram of Sri Veera Kothandarama Temple and a visitor is reminded of the shrines of Sri Natarajar and Sri Govindaraja Perumal at Chidambaram.

The idol of Sri Nataraja which is about four feet in height in this temple is also stated to have been unearthed at the time when the idols of Sri Kothandaramar's shrine were found. This temple has one prakaram. The sanctum sanctorum has been beautifully constructed with marble stones. This is said to have been constructed in the year 1920 by a philanthropic Chettiar of Muthupatnam in Karaikudi. Another Natarajar's idol has been found recently while excavating. It is worshipped as the festival deity. Both these are made of Panchalogam and reveal exquisite workmanship.

The temple affairs are managed by a Hereditary Trustee.

VEDHARANYAM

Sri Vedharanyaswamy Temple

Vedharanyam, popularly known as "*Tirumaraikkadu*" or the forest of the Vedhas lies on the Thiruthuraipoondi Point Calimere line of the Southern Railway. It is one of the famous Saptha Vidanga Sthalams. The four Vedhas, viz., Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana are said to have worshipped the Lord. It is about thirty-five kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi and hundred kilometres from Thanjavur.

Situated in the heart of Vedharanyam at a slightly lower level, the temple with its lofty towers and artistic vimanams is very inviting. It is a place considered to be very sacred, second in sanctity only to Rameswaram. A bath in the sea here on the New Moon day of Thai (December-January) or Adi (July-August) is considered to be holy. This famous Sivasthalam has been celebrated by the reputed Thevaram Saints in their hymns. The village was hallowed by the birth of *Paranjothi Munivar*, the author of "*Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam*" who lived in the Thirteenth Century A.D. The population of this Panchayat is 18,033 (8,826 males and 9,207 females) according to the 1961 Census. Politically it gained importance in recent times due to the Salt Sathyagraha movement. The Kanniga Gurukulam founded by Sardar Vedaratanam Pillai is also situated here. Thanks to this famous temple, the village is a place of pilgrimage round the year.

The temple which faces east covers an area of about 6·39 acres and has some ninety stone inscriptions. It is fashioned beautifully after the Thiruvarur Thyagarajaswamy Temple and presents an inspiring view. It is surrounded by a wall of granite stones. There are picturesque gopurams on the east and west and there are at present only two prakarams inside the ramparts. Around the temple are the four *Ratha Veethis*. These *Ratha Veethis* are known as Dasaratha Maharaja Streets even today as King Dasaratha is supposed to have stayed here after installing a Naga (snake) beneath the Sthala Viruksha

Vanni Tree and worshipped at this shrine. In order to commemorate his stay, the car streets were named after him. There are three mandapams in the temple precincts. The temple is said to have been built during the period of the famous Chola rulers. Since both Appar and Sambandhar visited this shrine and worshipped the Lord here, it should have been in existence even prior to Seventh Century A.D. The inscriptions here date from the time of Parantaka I (905-945 A.D.).

The sacred Manikarnikai Theertham, Vedhamirta Theertham and the Vedha Theertham are the sacred waters of this sthalam. A holy bath in these sacred theerthams and in the sea is believed to ensure salvation to devotees. Taking a bath on the New Moon days during the months of Adi and Thai is considered to be specially sacred. There is also a well here by name Viswamitra Theertham which is even now the only source of good water for the whole village. Besides this, there are several other holy waters in the vicinity of the temple.

The presiding deity of the temple, a Swayambu Lingam, is known as Vedharanyaswamy and Vedhanayagar because of the fact that the four Vedhas adored Him. Situated in a separate shrine to the north of the Siva temple stands His divine consort known as Vedhanayagi and Veenavada Vibhooshani as it is only here that the sweet and melodious voice of Goddess Parvathi was found to be far superior to the note of Veena tuned by Goddess Saraswathi. In the outer prakaram of the temple are found the images of Sri Kala Bairavar, Sapthakannigais, Viswanathar, Visalakshi, Sedhumadhava, Siddhi Vinayagar, Mooladhara Ganapathy, Parvathi, Siddheswara, Viswamitra, the three Lingam worshipped by Brahma, Agasthya, Veerahatti Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Chandikeswarar and Sastha (Hariharaputhrar). In the inner prakarams are enshrined the following deities : Vedharanyeswara alias Sathyagniswara in his marriage costume, Parasakthi known as Bhoga Sakthi, Thyagarajar, Kalyanasundarar, Arthanareeswarar, the sixty three Nayanmars, the Linga enshrined by Sri Rama, Dakshinamurthy, the Panchalingams adored by the Pandavas, Mahalakshmi, Gajalakshmi,

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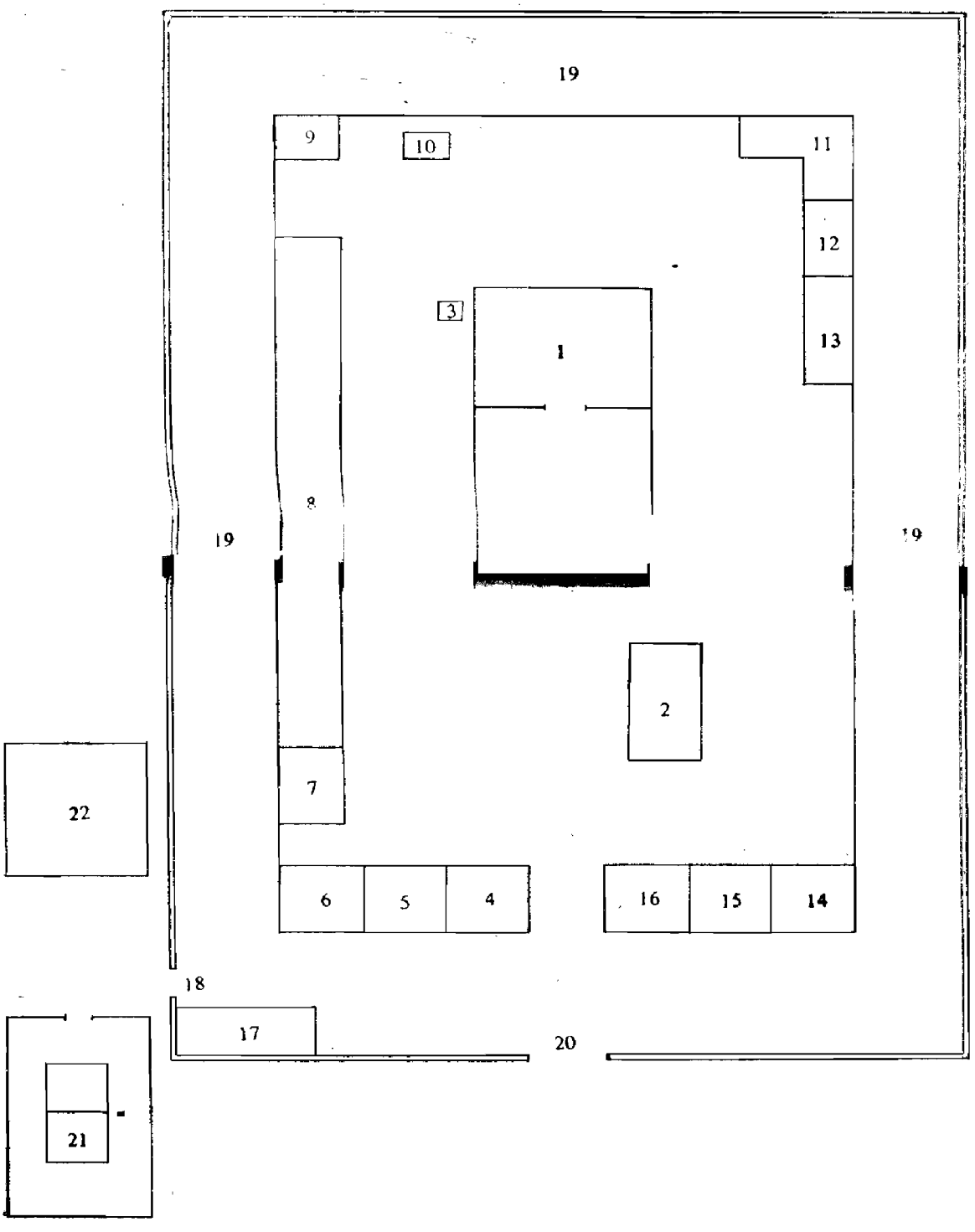
42. Kasi Lingams
43. Pillaiyar
44. Bairavar

SRI OUSHADHESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

TIRUTHURAIPUNDI

(Not to Scale)



Saneeswarar, Yoga Saraswathi, Nagesa, Annapoorani, Durgai, Chandrsasekharar, Natarajar and Navagrahas. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is that the Navagrahas are installed in a line unlike in other shrines where they are in three rows of three each. By the side of the sixty three Nayanmars, there is the sannadhi of Vedha Vinayagar whom the four Vedhas had worshipped. There is yet another Vinayagar in this temple known as Nadukkam Theertha Vinayagar. It is said that to allay fear (*Nadukkam* means shivering) a devout prayer before this Vinayagar is a sure cure.

In the south-western corner of the temple in the inner prakaram, there is a shrine for Siva and Parvathi. The Lord is known as "Katchi Kodutha Nayanar" (God who gave darshan to devotees). There is a pillar here made of round stone which could be turned. The belief is that if women praying to be blessed with children turn it for sometime, their prayers are answered. There is an imposing idol of Goddess Gajalakshmi in the north-western corner of the outer prakaram on a raised platform. There is also an enchanting stone image of Goddess Durgai at the north-eastern corner of the temple. On the pedestal, there is the head of a buffalo. The Goddess has eight hands, holding conch, disc, bow and arrow, sword and dagger etc. On the left hand is a parrot and the mood of benediction is shown by the right hand.

All these idols are well carved. There are a number of paintings and drawings which are worth seeing. The most important of these are those of the sixty-three Nayanmars, Natarajar, Kalasamharamurthy, Gajasamharamurthi, Dakshinamurthy, Chandikeswarar, Veerabadrar, Maha Vishnu in the company of Sri Devi and Bhu Devi and Sri Ramar. In all the Saivite shrines of the south only Chandikeswara is an important deity, but in Vedharanyam Temple not only Chandikeswara but also His consort Chandikeswari are installed side by side.

There are two Sthalapuranams relating to this temple, of which the first one is the "Vedharanya Puranam" consisting of 3,243 verses by Sri Agora Devar and the other is by Sri

Paranjothi Munivar containing thousand verses. There is also a reference to this temple by Sekkizhar in his "Periya Puranam".

Poojas are performed six times daily. The temple owns antique jewellery of both gold and silver worth about Rs. 1,41,700. The immovable properties belonging to the temple comprise about 10880·35 acres of wet and dry lands. These are distributed in about thirty-three villages and include 2,452 acres of salt beds in the village of Agasthyampalli. The income derived from the lands by way of lease is about Rs. 2,50,000, while the salt beds fetch Rs. 6,900 per annum. Besides, a subsidy of Rs. 948·62 is also paid by the Government. These amounts are spent for the upkeep and general maintenance of the temple.

The temple runs two choultries for the convenience of the pilgrims. Apart from a good collection of costly vahanas which are preserved with great care, there are ancient cars (Thers) and a ratham in the temple, all made of wood. The annual hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 1,000. The temple also collects charges from devotees for performing Archanas which fetch an additional annual income of about Rs. 1,000.

The following are the annual festivals observed by the temple.

Brahmothsavam in Masi, Eighteenth Day Theerthavari festival during Masi Magam, Maha Sivarathri, Panguni Uthiram (March-April), Thirukkalyanam festival on the Sukla Sapthami Day (April-May), Skandha Sashti in Ayppasi (October-November), Karthigai Deepam (November-December), Dhanur Pooja (Thiruvadhirai-Margazhi) (December and January), New Year's Day, Thai Poosam and Pongal (January and February).

Of these, the Thirukkalyana Uthsavam during the month of Chithirai (April-May) is the most important one when a large number of devotees from the neighbouring villages, taluks and districts congregate.

This ancient Saivite shrine is steeped in legend. It is said that it was here that the Lord granted to Sage Agasthya darshan in His "Thirumanakkolam pose", i.e., wedding guise. Because of this, Vedharanyam was also popularly called "*Dakshina Kailasam*". Vedharanyam is said to be one of the five temples where Musukundah installed the Spadika Lingam which he brought from Heaven. It is understood that Sri Rama got rid of his 'Brahmahatti Dosha' after worshipping Sri Veerahatti Vinayagar here, who is installed under the sacred Vanni Tree, the Sthala Viruksham of the temple. There is a popular belief that this temple was built by Amsuman, one of the sons of Sagara, an ancestor of Sri Rama. It is also said that the Pancha Pandavas installed five Lingams and worshipped them here.

There is an interesting anecdote relating to Sri Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar which runs thus :

Once Thirugnanasambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar (Appar) came to Vedharanyam (Vedhavanam) on a pilgrimage. They entered the temple, came to the sannadhi and found that the main gate was closed. They understood that the four Vedhas who worshipped the Lord had locked the gate. Since then, the daily worship was conducted through another passage. The main gate was always closed. Sambandhar requested Appar to sing a "Padhigam" (verse) so that the gate might open due to divine grace. Appar sang a song entreating the Lord to show mercy on them. The gate opened. The two devotees entered, worshipped the Lord and praised Him. While returning, Appar asked Sambandhar to pray to the Lord that the doors might be closed. Even as Sambandhar sang his verse, the gateway closed automatically. The wonder-struck devotees fell at the feet of the two great saints. This event is commemorated to this day.

An Executive Officer and a single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department are managing the affairs of this temple.

About three kilometres from Vedharanyam, inside a jungle at the top of a sand mound, the holy footprints of Sri Rama on

a stone are preserved. It is under the protection of the Archaeological Department. It is said that while selecting the vantage point for crossing the sea to Lanka, Sri Rama had to come to this place and stand at the top of the sand mound to locate Lanka. Finding that only the rear side of Ravana's place was visible, the site was abandoned as a hero should not enter into the enemy's kingdom through the back door.

THIRUTHURAIPOONDI

Sri Bava Oushadhapureeswaraswamy Temple

This ancient Saivite shrine is situated in the heart of Thiruthuraipoondi town which is a railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi line. The temple with its sacred tank "Mangala Theertham" and artistic vimanam seems to heighten the greatness of this sthalam. The place is a town Panchayat having a population of 13,508 (6,932 males and 6,576 females) according to the 1961 Census. Thiruthuraipoondi was also known in the past as Vilvavanam.

The temple which faces west has two prakarams apart from three sancta. It covers an area of about 2·59 acres. It is said that it was built 800 years ago. The presiding deity of the temple Sri Bava Oushadhapureeswarar is represented by a four feet high installed Lingam. His divine consort known as Brahannayagi is situated in a separate sanctum in a standing posture, facing east. The gopuram in front of this shrine has three tiers with plaster figures. There is a separate shrine for Sri Gajasamharamurthy. The festival idols of the God and Goddess made of Panchalogam are very enchanting. The festival idol of Goddess Mangalanayaki will be taken in procession on the Adi Friday, Thai Friday and Adi Pooram. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the famous "Panchamuga Vadhyam", a rare musical instrument. It is a peculiar drum in the shape of a hollow urn or a large metal pot with five circular mouths at the top, the central one being of a larger circumference than the rest. It is played on the occasion of

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7. Gaja Samharamoorthy
8. Vahana Godown
9. Bairavar
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13. Store Room
14. Nardhana Vinayagar
15. Theertha Vidanga Vinayagar
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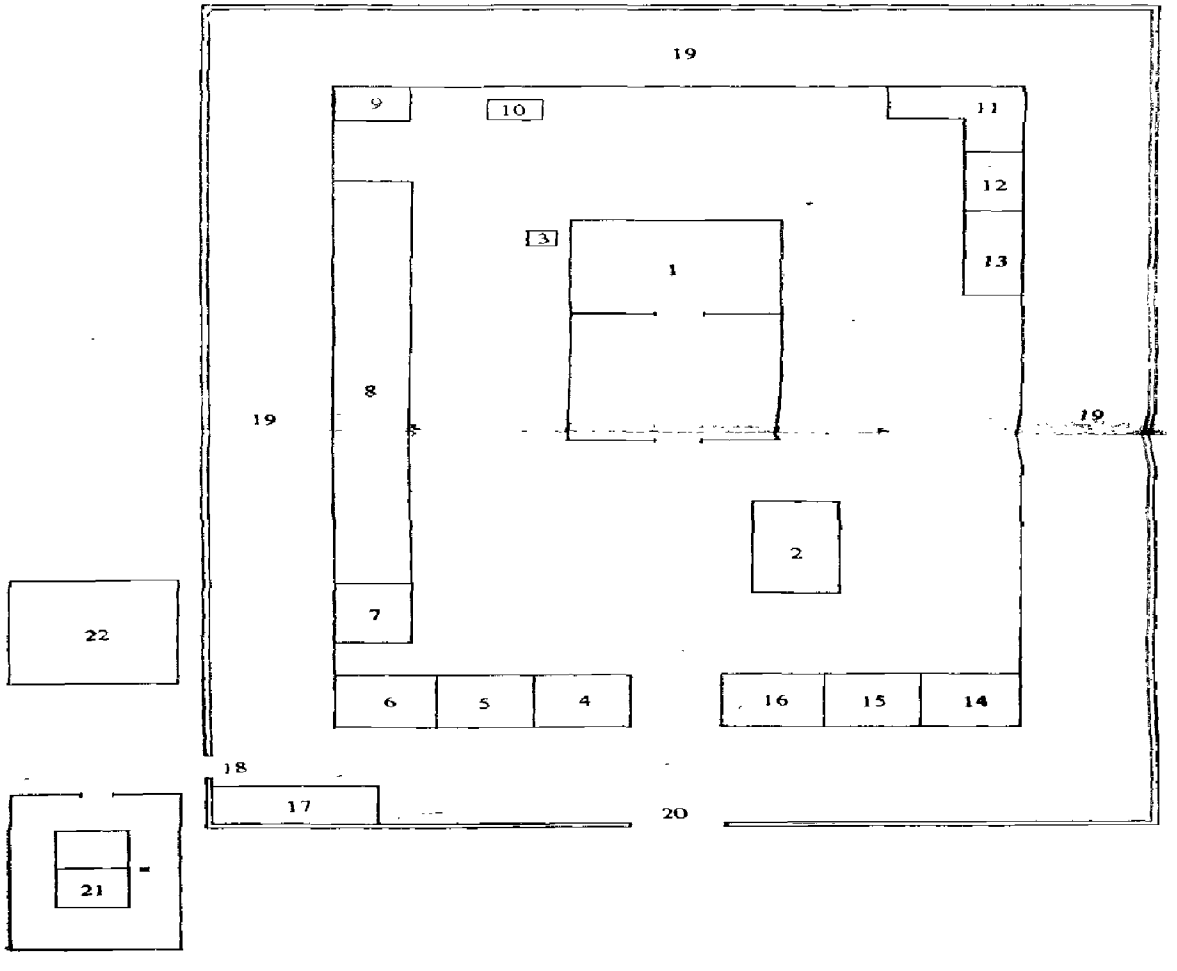
18. Entrance to Amman Sannathi
19. Outer Prakaram
20. Raja Gopuram
21. Amman Sannathi
22. Pushkarani

SRI OUSHADHESWARASWAMY TEMPLE

TIRUTHURAIPUNDI

(Not to Scale)



the Uthsavam of Sri Thyagarajaswamy of this shrine. The other shrine to possess such an instrument as this is Sri Thyagarajaswamy Temple of Thiruvarur. This famous instrument is specially sacred to Thyagarajaswamy and is mainly associated with His Uthsavam every year. The sacred Vilva Tree is the Sthala Viruksham here.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns both antique and modern jewellery in gold and silver worth about Rs. 8,900 mostly donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 319·43 acres of wet and 71·03 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,20,000 by way of rent. This amount is spent towards the salaries of the temple servants, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. The Hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 1,800 per annum. Besides two silver rishabams, the temple owns the vahanams : rishabam, peacock, horse, ajah, bootham, and Kailasa Parvatham, all made of wood.

Brahmothsavam in Chithirai (April-May) which spreads over a period of eighteen days is the only important annual festival celebrated here with great eclat when about 5,000 devotees from far and near congregate.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

VADUGUR

Sri Oushadheeswaraswamy Temple

This is an ancient Saivite shrine situated at about three kilometres south of Odachery, on the Thiruthuraipoondi-Nagapattinam road. Thiruthuraipoondi which is about sixteen kilometres from this village is the nearest railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi line. Thanjavur, the District Headquarters and Thiruthuraipoondi, the Taluk Headquarters are

ninety-six and sixteen kilometres away respectively. The population of this village is 2,107, according to the 1961 Census.

The presiding deity of the temple is Sri Oushadheeswarar, a Swayambu Lingam. His divine consort Brahannayagi is situated in a separate sanctum, facing south. This ancient shrine is said to have been built during the period of the Cholas. Facing east, it covers an area of about eleven cents. It is surrounded by a well-built compound wall on all its four sides, with a flat gopuram in the front and presents a grand view. There are as many as four prakarams, apart from two vimanams. There is a separate shrine here for Sri Subramaniar. There are also several festival idols for Natarajar, Sivakamiamman, Subramaniar, Valli, Deivayanai, Somaskandhar, Ayyanar, Mariamman, Pidariamman, Manickavasagar and others.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The gold and silver ornaments of the temple are worth over Rs. 400. The temple owns about 7·72 acres of dry lands. The annual income of about Rs. 8,665 derived from the landed properties are being spent for performing daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. There is an ancient rishabam and a peacock vahanam made of wood.

Sivarathri, Skandha Sashti, Thiruvadhirai, Tamil New Year's Day, Navarathri, Panguni Uthiram, Thai Poosam and Karthigai Deepam are the major festivals celebrated by the temple every year. Of this, Skandha Sashti and Mahasivarathri are the most important ones, which attract about 5,000 devotees from the neighbouring villages.

There is an interesting legend regarding the origin of this shrine. The story goes that it was customary for an ardent devotee of the Lord of this place belonging to the Chettiar community to go to Thiruvarur daily, to have darshan of the Lord. It is said that one day due to heavy rains, he could not reach the temple in time, before the temple gates were closed. Being disappointed at this, the devotee decided to put an end to his life. Just then the Lord, pleased at his devotion, appeared

before him and informed him that from then onwards, he need not go to Thiruvarur to have His darshan. Instead, He Himself will come to him at his own place, which was then a thick forest. As directed by the Lord, the devotee started clearing the shrubs and bushes under a Magizha Tree. During this process, his axe hit the edge of a stone inadvertently and to his astonishment, he found blood sprouting from that point. When it was taken out, he found it to be a beautiful Siva Lingam. He constructed a small temple in the same place and enshrined the Lingam.

A single Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department is in charge of the temple.

THAGATTUR

Sri Bairavanathaswamy Temple

This ancient Saivite shrine is situated in Thagattur village, about six kilometres from Melamarudhur railway station on the Thiruthuraipoondi-Point Calimere route. Buses plying between Vedharanyam and Thiruthuraipoondi pass through this village. The population of this village is 3,330 (1,661 males and 1,669 females) according to the 1961 Census.

The temple which faces east is situated in beautiful surroundings with green paddy fields around. River Mulliyar is flowing to the west of it. It covers an area of about twenty-two cents. It has a single prakaram and two sancta apart from a forty feet high Rajagopuram in the front, with plaster figures on it. The presiding deity of the temple, Lord Bairavanathar is represented by a 3·5 feet high granite vigraham. His festival idol is made of Panchalogam. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the presence of Sri Bairavar in the sanctum sanctorum in the form of a vigraham (with his conventional vehicle of dog) instead of a Lingam, as is usually found in other Siva temples. The festival idol of Sri Bairavar is also very attractive.

The old Garba Graham and Arthamandapam which were built of brick and mortar have been dismantled and rebuilt with stone. A Kumbabishegam was performed in 1966. There are separate sancta here for several sub-deities like Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Ambal, Visalakshi, Mahalingam and Chandikeswara, around the prakaram. A new Vasantha-mandapam has been constructed on the north-eastern corner of the prakaram.

The presiding deity, Sri Bairavanathaswamy is said to be very powerful. The Lord is said to readily answer to the prayers of His ardent devotees. This is evidenced by the fact that even now a large number of devotees come here particularly on Mondays and Fridays, when the priest of the temple, possessed by the God, predicts the future of the devotees. Devotees undergo tonsuring in fulfilment of their vows. Those who are possessed by evil spirits, stay in this temple and offer worship till they are cured.

Saint Sundarar had composed several sacred verses in praise of the presiding deity.

There is a guardian deity for this temple, who is locally called " Ravuthar ", as He is in the form of a Muslim in a tiny shrine opposite to the temple. Mondays and Fridays are considered specially sacred to this deity, when a large number of devotees congregate before His shrine offering bread and jaggery water to Him.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns both antique and modern jewellery in gold and silver, worth about Rs. 3,000, mostly donated by devotees. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 252·66 acres of both wet and dry lands, which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 10,000 by way of rent ; this sum is utilised for its upkeep and general maintenance. The annual Hundi collections of the temple amount to Rs. 100, while its income under Archana and Abishega charges is Rs. 400 per annum.

Brahmothsavam in Chithirai (April - May), Vinayaga Chathurthi, Vijaya Dhasami, Karthigai Deepam, Thiruvadhirai,

Sivarathri, and Dhanur pooja in Margazhi are the regular annual festivals celebrated here, of which the Chithirai Brahmothsavam is the most important one. This festival attracts a crowd of not less than 20,000 devotees from far and near.

The affairs of the temple are managed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

IDUMBAVANAM

Sri Sathgunanathar Temple

Situated in the heart of Idumbavanam, a village at a distance of about fourteen kilometres south-west of Thiruthuraipoondi is the temple of Sri Sathgunanathar with its beautiful Rajagopuram and artistic vimanam. The place is served by both bus and train, the nearest railway station being Pandi, at a distance of about eight kilometres. The population of this village is 4,253. The temple though small, is an ancient one.

The temple which faces east, has a single prakaram. It is surrounded by well built massive granite walls and covers an area of about 0·67 acre. The sacred Brahma Theertham is just in front of the temple. The entrance to the temple is crowned by a three-tiered Rajagopuram. There are two sancta and two beautiful vimanams apart from an Arthamandapam, a Mahamandapam and a Sobanamandapam. It is seen from the type of Rajagopuram and the compound walls that this temple should have been constructed by Chola Kings. The sanctum sanctorum and Arthamandapam were originally built of brick and mortar. Extensive renovations were carried out in 1906 when the sanctum sanctorum and Arthamandapam were constructed with stones. The outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum contain some beautiful images and carvings. There are also several artistically carved stone pillars here.

The presiding deity of the temple Sri Sathgunanathar alias Idumbavaneswarar is a Pradishta Lingam here, facing east. His divine consort is known as Mangalambigai. This temple has been renovated from time to time and a Kumbabishegam was performed in the year 1948. A noteworthy feature of this shrine is the presence of idols of Parvathi-Parameswarar, in the guise of newly-wed couple, behind the Moolavar in the sanctum sanctorum. There are several festival idols viz., Chandrasekharar, Somaskandhar, Natarajar, Subramaniar, Vinayagar, Sage Agasthyar, Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar, Manickavasagar, Sukravara Amman and others, all made of Panchalogam. Saints Appar and Thirugnanasambandhar have visited this shrine and composed many sacred hymns in praise of the Lord here.

Saint Sambandhar is said to have travelled a distance of four miles to reach this temple from a nearby village, with the help of his hands as he considered it a sin to walk the distance with his legs, because he found a number of Sivalingams all along the path.

Poojas are performed four times daily. The temple owns antique jewellery in gold, silver and diamonds worth about Rs. 31,200 of which the costly stone studded " Netri Pattam " of the Goddess deserves special mention. The landed properties of the temple comprise about 1,227 acres of both wet and dry lands, which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 1,00,000 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towads the salaries of the temple servants, for the payment of land tax and electricity charges, for the conduct of the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its general maintenance. Apart from several wooden vahanams and a silver rishabam, there is an old Ther (Car) made of wood, which is in a state of disrepair. Brahmothsavam in Vaikasi (May-June), Ani Thirumanjanam, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Karthigai Deepam, Arudhra Darshanam, Thai Poosam and Adi Pooram are the major annual festivals celebrated by the temple. Of these, the ten day Vaikasi Brahmothsavam is the most important one, which attracts about 5,000 devotees, from far and near.

This ancient shrine has a legendary background. According to the Brahmanda Puranam it is said that it was here that the Lord gave Sage Agasthya darshan with His consort Parvathi in the wedding guise (*Thirumanakkolam*).

Besides the Thevaram, Brahmanda Puranam and the Mahabharatham also refer to the antiquity of this temple. There is a belief that this place is associated with Idumba the demoness who married Bhima, the Pandava hero.

The affairs of the temple are managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

Thiruthuraipoondi Taluk has quite a number of ancient temples of importance which have been eulogised in the Thevaram. Apart from temples that have been dealt with in detail there are a few more which are described below :

Idumbavanam has a temple dedicated to Sarbanathaswamy. Sri Sarbanathaswamy, is an installed Lingam. Saint Thirugnana Sambandhar has sung hymns in praise of this Kshethram. The Vinayagar of this temple is known as Karpaga Vinayagar.

Agasthyampalli adjacent to Vedharanyam salt pans, possesses a temple dedicated to the Sage Agasthya. The temple contains a number of inscriptions relating to Chola and Pandya times. This is the place where Agasthya built a *Parnasala* (hut) and worshipped the Lord after being told by the Lord of Vedharanyam that He would appear before him with His matrimonial robes. It was from here that Agasthyar used to go daily to worship the Lord of the Vedhavanam. He established a Lingam here by name Agnipureeswarar, prayed him and had his ambitions and desires fulfilled.

Sikkal is a place situated at a distance of about two kilometres from Adhirangam where the shrine is dedicated to Sri Varbhamaneswara Swamy. This is one of the "Padal Petra Sthalams".

Nemam otherwise known as Thiruchchitrambalam is at a distance of eight kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi. This is also a Padal Petra Sthalam having been sung by Saint Thirugnanasambandhar. The temple here is dedicated to Sri Vedhapureeswarar and His divine consort is known as Vedhanayagi. Sri Neenerinathaswamy Temple of Thandalaicheri is another temple visited by Saint Thirugnanasambandhar and sung by him in Thevaram. The place is situated at a distance of four kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi and the nearest railway station is Manali.

Pannatheru is at a distance of seven kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi, where there is a famous Siva temple dedicated to Sri Pannaka Parameswara Swamy. It is a fairly big temple covering an area of more than an acre with two prakarams and a Rajagopuram of about fifty-three feet in height. The temple is said to have been sung by *Karuvur Thevar*. The legend about this temple is that Adhisesha had worshipped the deity of this place and got rid of leprosy from which he suffered for long. The temple owns about 330 acres of lands, which have been leased out. The annual income from these lands is about Rs. 32,000 which is utilised for the general maintenance and conduct of poojas in the temple.

Thiruthengur, at a distance of twenty-two kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi is also another important Saivite centre, having been sung by Saint Thirugnanasambandhar. The temple here is dedicated to Sri Rajathagireswaraswamy and the Goddess is Perianayagi Amman. It is said that this is the place where Lakshmi worshipped Lord Siva. According to a legend it is said that Sukracharya had regained his eyesight by visiting this place and worshipping the Lord here.

Sithaimur is twelve kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi. The shrine dedicated to Sri Sornasthapaneswarar, other-wise

known as Ponvaidhyanathar, is very ancient. It has four prakarams and a Rajagopuram sixty feet high. On account of improper maintenance, the temple has fallen into disrepair and needs attention and renovation. Saints Thirugnanasambandhar and Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal are said to have sung in praise of this deity. An interesting legend is associated with this temple which runs thus:

Once upon a time, there was a Chettiar family in this village. The head of the family had to be away from the village in connection with his business. He left behind his wife who had just then conceived. During his absence, his wife was assisted by a lame man. With the efflux of time, people came to know of her pregnancy. As the husband was out of the village, people came to the rash conclusion that she had committed adultery and drove her out of the village. In a helpless position, she had no other alternative except to pray for the mercy of the God. She had been visiting this temple daily doing some service. Having been moved by her prayers and true devotion Lord Sornasthapaneswarar was giving her one gold coin every day. It is also said that she was assisted by the Lord Himself while delivering the child. The Lord is believed to have come in the guise of a mid-wife.

Keeralathur, a place about sixteen kilometres from Thiruthuraipoondi is also famous for the Siva temple dedicated to Sri Agneeswaraswamy. This temple is also said to be very ancient and has been sung by Saint Thirugnanasambandhar in the Thevaram. Legend has it that Lord Siva himself got rid of the evil influence of Saturn, when he visited this place.

PATTUKKOTTAI TALUK

ADIRAMAPATTINAM

Sri Abhaya Varadheswaraswamy Temple

This small but ancient temple is situated by the side of a lake facing east. Adiramapattinam which was once a Port is about thirteen kilometres south-east of Pattukkottai in the north-western corner of Palk's Bay and the western end of the great mud swamp that extends as far as Point Calimere. The name is a contraction of *Adi-Vira-Ramapattinam*, the place having been founded by the Pandya King Adivira Rama (1562-1567 A.D.). This place has a predominantly Muslim population. The total population of this village is about 14,322 according to the 1961 Census.

' Adirai ' is the other name for this place. It is on the Thiruvarur-Karaikudi railway line. The temple is about two kilometres from the railway station. Buses which are plying from Thanjavur, Mannargudi and Pattukkottai pass through this village.

The temple is said to have been built by Chola Kings. Kumbabishegam was performed after renovation in 1941 and again in February 1960. The Rajagopuram, about twenty-five feet high was constructed in 1960. The temple has a single prakaram. The total area occupied by this shrine is about thirty-six cents.

Sri Abhaya Varadheswarar is the presiding deity facing east and Sri Sundara Nayagi is the divine consort facing south

Goddess Pidari Amman
Sri Abhaya Varadheeswaraswamy Temple
Adhiramapattinam.

Vinayagar, Subramaniar, Vannimara Vinayagar, Navagrahas, Surya and Bairavar are the other sub-deities installed in the prakaram. The festival idols of Adhikara Nandhi, Nalvar, Somaskandhar and Subramaniar kept in the Arthamandapam are fine pieces of art.

The Tamil booklet about this temple published in 1956 states that the idols in the temple might once have been enshrined in some other place. According to this booklet, the ruins of the temples of Vinayagar, Siva and Vishnu were found in the dilapidated Fort near the village.

Four poojas are performed daily. The temple owns 33·64 acres of wet and 158·17 acres of dry lands besides a Coconut garden and eight houses. The annual income of this temple is about Rs. 17,200. There are several antique and modern jewels, mostly donated by the devotees in this temple. Among the many monthly festivals which are being celebrated here, Panguni Uthiram is the most important.

There are several inscriptions on the outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum from which it is seen that the God and Goddess of this temple were known in the past as Udayar and Nachiyar respectively. Some of the inscriptions show that endowments were made to the temple by Raja Raja.

Goddess Durga, the presiding deity of Chelliamman Temple is said to be the guardian deity of this village. A big festival is celebrated in the month of Adi in honour of this Goddess. This village is also known as Chelliamman Nagar. It is also surrounded by the temples of Pidariamman, Mariamman and Ayyanar.

The temple is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of three members and an Executive Officer, appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

INSCRIPTIONS

All the inscriptions found in the temple are in fragments. The name of the village is mentioned as Vira Chola Pattinam,

evidently the present name is a corrupt form of the above name. An image of Nachiyar was set up in the temple in Twelfth Century A.D. Reference is made to Naganathar in an inscription of Twelfth Century A.D.

PERUMAGALORE

Sri Somanathaswamy Temple

This is an important shrine situated in Perumagalore village of Pattukkottai Taluk. Peravurani is the nearest railway station about thirteen kilometres from this village on the Mayuram-Karaikudi line. It is about ninety kilometres from Thanjavur and forty-six kilometres from Pattukkottai. There are bus facilities to reach this place. The population of the village is 3,721 according to 1961 Census.

A characteristic feature about this shrine is that the Swayambu Lingam here, called Sri Somanathaswamy is milky-white in colour and is about three feet in height. His divine consort known as Sundaranayagi Amman is situated in a separate sanctum on the western side of the Mahamandapam.

This tiny temple is very ancient having been constructed by Raja Raja Chola. The area of the temple is about fifty cents. Originally the sanctum sanctorum and Arthamandapam alone were in existence. The Mahamandapam and the compound wall around the temple are subsequent additions made some hundred years ago.

Four poojas are performed daily. The temple owns about thirty-six acres of lands and derives an annual income of about Rs. 3,400 which is utilised for the poojas and festivals and for the maintenance of the temple. The temple is managed by a Hereditary Trustee and is under private management.

According to a legend, King Raja Raja Chola who was on his way to Rameswaram came to this place when he found an

unusually big and attractive lotus flower in a pond. He plucked it out and found to his great surprise a beautiful Siva Lingam purely white in colour underneath it. He was so happy to find the Lingam that he embraced it in all devotion and constructed a beautiful temple here by installing the Lingam.

To the south of this temple there is a small shrine for Lord Murugar which is said to have been constructed about hundred years ago by the villagers.

There are some informative stone inscriptions in Somanathaswamy Temple.

THIRUCHCHITRAMBALAM

Sri Purathana Vaneswaraswamy Temple

This ancient, Saivite temple is situated about five kilometres from Thiruchchitrambalam railway station. This place is on the Mayuram-Karaikudi route. It is about fifteen kilometres from Pattukkottai on the Pattukkottai-Aranthangi bus route. The population of this Panchayat is about 2,745.

This is one of the ancient shrines in the Thanjavur region. The construction of gopuram is similar to that of the gopuram of the big temple in Thanjavur. It is, however, not so tall. Prominence is given to the worship of Natarajar here although the temple is dedicated to Sri Purathana Vaneswarar or the Lord of the primeval forest. From the inscriptions in this temple, it is learnt that Lord Natarajar is also known as Ambalathaduvar. The Goddess of this temple is known as Perianayagi.

Thirugnanasambandhar had visited the temple and sung about it in his Thevaram. He refers to the place as Thiruchitramani or Chitramani. The other three Saivite Saints, viz, Appar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar have also sung hymns in praise of this temple. All these songs are published in the

book "*Kshethra Kovai*". In this temple, there is a shrine for Lord Ganesar who is called "Poo Vizhungai Vinayagar".

The temple occupies a vast area of five acres. Four poojas are performed daily. The annual hundi collection comes to about Rs. 50 only. The temple owns a market from which a sum of Rs. 4,400 is derived as annual rent. There is no other source of revenue to this temple.

Rishabam, horse, peacock, swan, bandicoot and bootham, all made of wood are the mounts in this temple used during festival times. New Year's Day, Masi Mahothsavam, Thiruvadhirai, Arudhra Darshan and Vaikasi Visagam are the festivals celebrated during a year. Of these, Vaikasi Visagam is the most important festival. Large number of people gather to witness this festival. From two inscriptions noticed in the village, it is understood that in the latter half of the Fifteenth Century, the region was governed by a local family known by the name of Malavaraya. This name is still current among many families in Thanjavur.

A single Hereditary Trustee is managing the temple under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

INSCRIPTIONS

CHOLAS :

Parantaka I (907-953 A.D.)
Raja Raja I (985-1014 A.D.)
Rajendra I (1012-1044 A.D.)
Raja Raja III (1216-1256 A.D.)
Rajendra II (1051-1063 A.D.)

PANDYA :

Varaguna Maharaja.
Maravarman Sundara Pandya.
Srivallabha (1345-1366 A.D.)

VIJAYANAGAR :

Venkatapatiraya.
Lingama Nayaka of Senji.

THE VILLAGE: The village is referred to as Thiruchirremam, a devadana brahmadeya in Raja Raja Nadu.

THE DEITY: The main deity is called Thiruchirremam Udaiya Mahadeva in early inscriptions. In later inscriptions it is called Palaiyavanap Perumal.

STRUCTURES: The Central shrine should be assigned to Twelfth Century A.D. as it bears the inscription of Maravarman Sundara Pandya and Rajendra Chola III. A certain Udaiyan Arangalvan alias Kudirai Andan of Neduvayal is said to have made some additions to the temple in Thirteenth Century A.D. But as the door jumps to the entrance to the Arthamandapa carry inscriptions of earlier kings like Pandya Varaguna and Chola Parantaka I, the sanctum should have been renovated in Twelfth Century A.D. The pillars in the mandapam carry inscriptions of Raja Raja I, Rajendra I and others. One of the pillar was gifted by a certain Mittan-Raman alias Madiyalpuraiyar.

GIFTS: The residents of the Sangamangalam gifted lands for Abishega to the God in Saka 1525 (1603 A.D.). Kulothunga Chola Chetti, a horse dealer of Malaimandalam, gifted lands for worship to the Goddess. In the thirty-third year of Raja Raja III, gifts of land were made for digging a channel to feed the tank in Thiruchirremam. The Pandya King Srivallabha himself has gifted some lands to the temple. A certain Virapratapa Malavaraiyan, a Samanta (General) seems to have been influential in this region in the reign of Maravarman Sundara Pandya.

NADIAMBALPURAM

H/O PATTUKKOTTAI

Sri Nadiamman Temple

This important and well endowed temple dedicated to the village Goddess Nadiamman is situated in Nadiambalpuram,

a hamlet of Pattukkottai. The temple is about a kilometre from Pattukkottai railway station and about forty-five kilometres from Thanjavur. The population of Pattukkottai Town Panchayat is about 24,726.

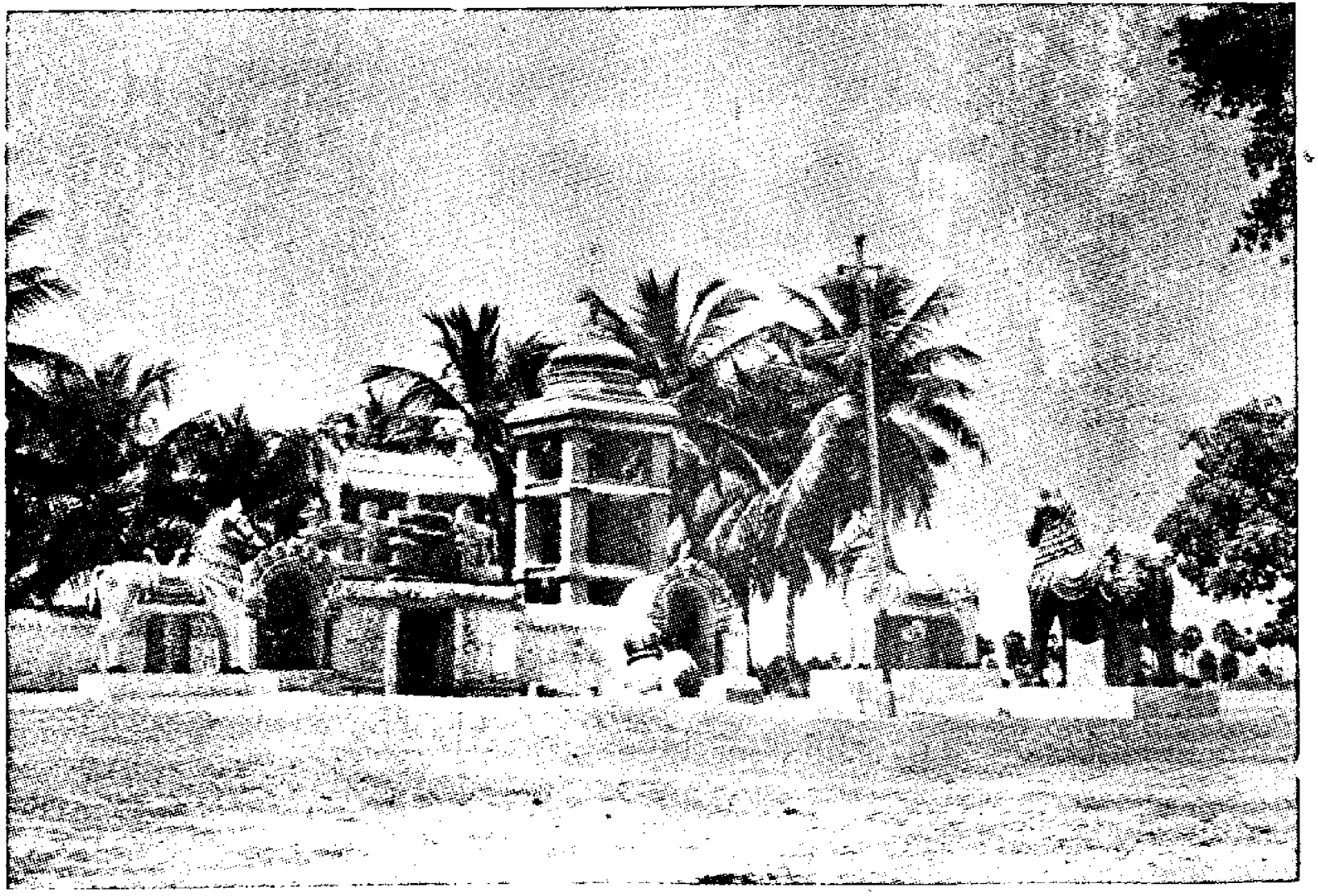
It is understood that this temple was built about five hundred years ago. There is a Raja gopuram in front of the temple. Goddess Nadiamman in sitting posture is the presiding deity of this temple. The festival deity is also in the same pattern. There is a sanctum for Vinayagar in this temple. About hundred to two hundred persons congregate here every Friday to worship this Goddess.

The temple occupies about five thousand square feet. Two poojas are performed daily. The temple owns some valuable antique and modern ornaments worth about Rs. 22,400. An antique Manga Malai is worth mentioning among the jewels. The temple derives an annual income of about Rs. 22,700 through the lands and shops leased out. This amount is used for performing poojas, celebrating festivals and paying salaries to staff. The hundi collection will be in the order of about Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000 per year.

There is a silver yali vahanam and a silver swing in this temple. Mounts such as swan, horse, Kamadhenu, elephant and boodham, all made of wood, are also available here. The festival celebrated during the Panguni month is an important one. About 50,000 persons gather from far and near on this occasion.

Devotees visit this temple in fulfilment of various vows made by them. Children of this place are popularly named after the Goddess of the temple.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.



A Closer view of the temple
Sri Nadiamman Temple, Pattukkottai

NAGARAM

Sri Balasubramaniaswamy Temple

The temple for Lord Murugar in Nagaram village is situated about eight kilometres from Merpanaikadu railway station which is on the Mayuram-Karaikudi line. There is a metalled road from Keeramangalam to this village. The total population of this village is 677.

This temple was built by Sri Vijaya Ragunatha Arunachala Vanangamudi Vazhuvadiar, Zamindar of Nagaram about hundred years ago. Later on renovation work was made by a member of the family of the Zamindar.

The total area of the land occupied by this temple is about five cents. There are three prakarams in this temple. The peculiarity of the temple is that it has been constructed on an artificial brick mound. The presiding deity of this temple, Sri Balasubramaniar is in a standing posture. The height of the idol is about two feet. The festival deity made of copper is one foot high. Only one pooja is performed daily. He is paid wages out of the income of the temple.

This temple owns about fifteen acres of land in Mumbalai village in Arantangi Taluk and three old buildings. The land has been leased out. Through this the temple gets an annual income of about Rs. 7,400. The temple also gets about Rs. 1,000 by levying a nominal fee for performing Archanas and Abishegas.

The temple is having a car, a ratham and a palanquin. Besides the following mounts are also available in this temple, viz., peacock (small and big), horse and swan. The ratham is twenty feet in height and the palanquin is covered with silver plate. Thai Poosam and Panguni Uthiram are observed as festival days in this temple. Of these, Panguni Uthiram is the main festival.

The Zamindar who built this shrine was in the habit of visiting Palani once a year to offer worship to Sri Baladhanda-

yuthapaniswamy. Once when the Zamindar was at Palani, he is said to have heard a divine voice saying that He would come to his village. When the Zamindar returned home, he found to his immense joy, a beautiful idol of Muruga in his field and he raised this temple for the deity.

The temple is under the Zamin's maintenance. The temple affairs are being managed by a Hereditary Trustee.

ATHALORE

H/O PERAVURANI

Sri Veeramahali Amman Temple

Sri Veeramahali Amman Temple is situated in the midst of a grove of trees facing west. The place is about two kilometres from Peravurani railway station on Mayuram-Karaikudi route. Bus facilities are also available to reach this village. The total population of this Panchayat is about 7,505.

The temple is said to be very ancient. The Thanjavur King Tuljaji (1763-1783) is said to have renovated and improvised the temple and endowed this village as '*Manyam*' (gift) to it. There is an inner prakaram and an outer prakaram in this temple. The sacred tank in front of the temple is known as "Amman Theertham". Sri Kuttiappar shrine is on the southern side and He is known as the guardian deity for the Goddess. Kuttiappar is in a standing posture. He is depicted as piercing a ferocious tiger with his spear. Manimandapam and Bali Peedam are in front of the Amman sanctum sanctorum.

The image of Sri Veeramahali Amman with eight hands depicted as trampling a demon is installed in the sanctum sanctorum of this temple. The festival deity is also in the same pattern. There is a Siva temple east of the Amman temple. The presiding deity of this temple is known as Thirukalanatheswarar and the Goddess Bragathambal otherwise known as Peria Nayagi.

Daily two poojas are performed one in the morning and another at night. A separate pooja for Sri Kuttiappar is performed. Some modern jewels worth about Rs. 600 are available in this temple.

The Amman temple occupies a space of about 4,700 square feet. The temple owns about 200 acres of wet and 100 acres of dry lands. They are leased out for cultivation and the annual income comes to about Rs. 42,900. This is being used for the performance of poojas, festivals and maintenance of the temple. The annual hundi collection comes to about Rs. 800. The temple also gets about Rs. 1,500 annually by levying a nominal fee for performing Archana, Kavadi, Marriage etc.

There are three vahanas and a palanquin here apart from a big *Ther*. The Brahmothsavam festival is celebrated for ten days during June-July of every year. A crowd of about 5,000 people gather here every day during this festival.

Legend has it that Veeramahali Amman came to this place at the desire of the sages to protect their penance.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of three members appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

PARAKKALAKOTTAI

Sri Madhyapureeswaraswamy Temple

This Saivite temple is situated in Parakkalakottai village about three kilometres from Maravakkadu railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi route. Buses are plying from Pattukkottai to Thiruthuraipoondi through this village. The total population of this village is 1,597.

It is understood that this temple was built by the ancestors of the present Hereditary Trustee about two hundred years ago.

The front mandapam of the temple was built about ten years back with the permission of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. There is no Rajagopuram. There is only one prakaram.

The Banyan Tree in the sanctum sanctorum is worshipped as the presiding deity of this temple. There is no Lingam. The presiding deity is known as Sri Madhyapureeswarar or Pothu Udayar. There is no daily pooja here for the deity. A pooja is performed only on every Monday night.

The gold jewels and silver kavachams of the temple are worth about Rs. 1,000. The annual income of this temple is about Rs. 18,900 through the landed properties. Besides the temple is also getting about Rs. 20,000 from hundi collections annually. The temple also levies a nominal amount for performing Archana etc. The main festival of this temple is the last Monday in the month of Karthigai which is celebrated with great eclat. This festival attracts large number of villagers from the neighbourhood.

The presiding deity of the temple is considered very powerful. Devotees strongly believe that one who worships the Lord here will get one's desires fulfilled.

The villagers ardently pray to the God when their cattle suffer from disease or when their crops wither. The Lord, it is believed, fulfills their prayers.

There is no Executive Officer for this temple. A single Hereditary Trustee is managing the affairs of the temple.

MANJAVAYAL

H/O THAMARANKOTTAI

This temple of Muruga is situated in Manjavayal village about two kilometres north of Maravakkadu railway station on the Mayuram-Karaikudi route. The place is about sixty kilo-

metres from Thanjavur and fifteen kilometres from Pattukkottai. It is about 1·5 kilometres towards south from Parakkalakottai village on the Pattukkottai-Thiruthuraipoondi bus route. The total population of this Panchayat is about 7,950.

The temple was built by one Kuppaiyandi Velala belonging to the Musukundha Nadu and Velala caste about hundred and fifty years ago. Kumbabishegams were performed thrice in this temple—in 1918, 1946 and 1954. The shrine occupies an area of thirteen cents. It has an Arthamandapam, a Mahamandapam, a Sabahmandapam and a Vasanthamandapam. A separate sanctum for Vinayagar is found in the prakaram. The festival idols of Lord Balasubramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai and Lord Vinayagar are of good workmanship.

Four poojas are performed daily. The temple owns some valuable gold and silver ornaments. Some of them are old. The temple owns about 103·13 acres of both wet and dry lands. The annual income derived out of them is about Rs. 18,200. The temple is also getting about Rs. 800 as additional income from its Hundi collections annually. The Hundi will be opened on the Chithira Pournami day during the Brahmothsavam and Thai Poosam every year, before the Trustees of the temple. Chithira Pournami and Brahmothsavam are the important festivals celebrated here. Besides, there are also some monthly festivals like Tamil New Year's Day, Vaikasi Visagam, Vinayaga Chathurthi, Saraswathi Pooja, Navarathri, Skandha Sashti, Thirukarthigai, Thai Poosam, Sivarathri etc. About 5,000 persons witness the Brahmothsavam.

There is an interesting legend regarding the origin of this shrine. A Saivite devotee by name Kuppaiyandi Velalar of Manjavayal used to go to Palani every year carrying the "Kavadi" in fulfilment of a vow. When he became old, he found it difficult to go. Knowing the suffering of his true devotee, Lord Muruga appeared in his dream once and directed him to establish a temple in Manjavayal itself and worship Him. Accordingly he built a temple here facing west as in Palani and worshipped the Lord here. The *District Gazetteer*

mentions another legend to the effect that Lord Subramaniar of Palani manifested here in response to the call of a Muslim called Annaviyar.

The temple is exempted from the direct administration of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department. But the Department has got the overall control over the temple. There is no Executive Officer. There are about sixteen persons belonging to the Hereditary Adheena Trust.

THAMARANKOTTAI

Sri Kanteeswaraswamy Temple

This ancient temple is situated in Thamarankottai village about seven kilometres from Thambikottai railway station. It is on the Mayuram-Karaikudi railway line and on the Pattukkottai-Tiruthuraipoondi bus route. The total population of this Panchayat is about 7,950.

This ruined temple was renovated by two ardent devotees about fifty years back. Kumbabishegam was performed in May 1961 after the construction of the Rajagopuram and vimanams. The Rajagopuram, forty-two feet high is having three tiers and five kalasams. There is only one prakaram in this temple. The vimanam of the Garba Graha which is 21·5 feet high has artistic and colourful stucco work.

Sri Kanteeswaraswamy, a Swayambu Lingam, about three feet high is the presiding deity. Dharmasamvarthini, is the Goddess of this temple. Sri Chandrasekharar with His consort, Natarajar with His consort, Somaskandhar, Vinayagar, Subramaniar with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai, Chandeswarar and Pidari Amman are the several festival deities here.

Five Poojas are performed daily. The temple owns a few modern jewels worth about Rs. 700, 82·70 acres of wet and 130·00 acres of dry lands as well as a Coconut garden. The

annual income through the landed properties is estimated at about Rs. 30,000 which is being spent for the celebration of the festivals and for the maintenance of the temple.

Vaikasi Visagam for twelve days is the Brahmothsavam of this temple. Besides there are some monthly festivals celebrated during the year. The annual Hundi collections comes to about Rs. 100 and Archana and Abishega fetch about Rs. 250. Peacock, swan, elephant, rishabam, bandicoot and pradosha rishabam are the mounts used during festival times. About 5,000 persons in and around the village witness the Brahmothsavam.

The temple has a rich legendary background. Sri Rama is said to have worshipped the Sivalingam here. According to another story, about three hundred years ago, a Chettiar found this temple hidden under a bush.

The temple is managed by an Executive Officer and a Board of Trustees consisting of five members, all appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department.

OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

Other important temples in Pattukkottai Taluk are briefly dealt with below :

Musiri is a place at a distance of ten kilometres from Pattukkottai. The ancient Siva temple dedicated to Sri Kailasanathaswamy here is said to have been constructed by Musukundha, one of the early Chola Kings. There is an interesting legend associated with the origin of this temple. It is said that King Musukundha who was suffering from leprosy went on a pilgrimage and stayed in this village for a night. The Lord directed him in his dream to construct a temple in the place and worship Him. The King constructed the temple and a tank and was worshipping the Lord every day after taking bath

in the tank. In due course, the King was miraculously cured of his serious ailment. Even now devotees believe that those who suffer from chronic diseases will be cured if they take bath in the holy waters of this temple and worship Lord Kailasanathaswamy.

Kadandhankudi is at a distance of sixteen kilometres from Pattukkottai, where there is a Siva temple dedicated to Sri Bragadheeswarar who is known for His great Sakthi. Thambikottai, a hamlet of Vadakkadu is another village at a distance of sixteen kilometres from Pattukkottai where the famous Siva temple dedicated to Sri Sundareswaraswamy is located. Legend has it that the deity was worshipped by Lakshmana of the great Epic Ramayana. There is an idol for Sri Lakshmana in this temple. The temple derives an annual income of about Rs. 11,200 from its lands which is utilised for its maintenance, conduct of festivals etc. Marungapallam is a place situated at a distance of about thirteen kilometres from Pattukkottai. The nearest railway station is Peravurani. The famous Siva temple of this place—dedicated to Sri Oushadhapureeswarar is said to have been constructed by the Maharashtra King Sarfoji. The important festival here is 'Magam' conducted in the Tamil month of Masi. This festival is said to attract quite a large number of people from the nearby villages.

ARANTANGI TALUK

AVADAYARKOIL

Sri Athmanathaswamy Temple

In the southern-east corner of Thanjavur district lies the sacred centre "Avadayarkoil" which was popularly known as Sivapuram and Thirupperundurai in Saivite literature. This important pilgrim centre in South India is about fifteen kilometres from the Arantangi railway station and can also be reached by bus. The ancient and celebrated temple of Athmanathaswamy here is full of architectural, iconographic and legendary interests.

The sculptural work of the temple is exquisite. Although the figures carved out are seen everywhere in the southern temples, still the workmanship is superb. A portion of a mandapam here is built of stone which from a distance looks like a zephyr work of wood, set together so nicely that an Englishman fired a shot at one corner to know its real structure. The bullet shot had made a hole of about an inch in circumference. Another marvel in the construction of this temple is that the rays of the setting sun always fall on the sanctum sanctorum although it is inside three prakarams.

This sacred Sivasthalam is considered most holy by all Saivites as it is associated with Saint Manickavasagar, the author of the famous "*Thiruvachagam*". In addition, he also composed the "*Thiruvembavai*" while he was at Thiruvannamalai and "*Thiruppalliyezhuchi*" when he stayed here.

Though the origin of this shrine is shrouded in mystery, it is believed to have been constructed by Manickavasagar. The name Avadayarkoil is supposed to be a corrupt form of "*Al-udaiyar-kovil*", Aludaiyar (servant devotee) referring to Saint Manickavasagar who had been taken as the 'Al' (servant) and taught divine wisdom by Lord Athmanathar of this place. In evidence of this, in one of the inscriptions of the temple the name of the presiding deity is mentioned as "*Aludar Parama Swamigal*". Avadayarkoil is a Panchayat having a population of 2,423 (1,309 males and 1,114 females) according to the 1961 Census.

A characteristic feature of the temple is that it faces south. It is situated on a ten-acre land. It is a huge structure and there are a number of mandapams through which one has to pass to reach the inner shrine. The holy tank in front of the temple is called "Deva Theertham". On the northern bank of this tank there is a separate shrine for Vallabha Ganapathy having ten hands. There is another tank inside the temple itself called "Agni Theertham".

Reputed to have been built by Sri Manickavasagar himself, the temple is a treasure-house of remarkable architecture of sculpture. The most beautiful piece of art in this temple lies in the construction of the rafters. Though made of stone, these rafters appear as if made of fine teak wood. They have been made so skilfully that the joints are not visible. They go by the name of "*Kodungais*". There are a number of mandapams and prakarams here. Corresponding to these mandapams, there are six Sabahs or halls where the Lord danced viz., Kanaka Sabah, Deva Sabah, Rathna Sabah, Sath Sabah, Chit Sabah and Ananda Sabah.

The seven pillars in the front row and the sculpture in the thousand pillared mandapa appear as though each one is a temple by itself. In the first pillar one sees the figure of Ugra Narasimha with Prahlada standing towards one side. The second pillar bears the figure of Goddess Kali wringing her hands at her defeat at the hands of the Lord who performed the "Urdhuva Thandavam" to subdue her. The Urudhuva

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1. Athmanathaswamy (Moolavar)
2. Manickavasagar
3. Vinayagar
4. Veerabadrar
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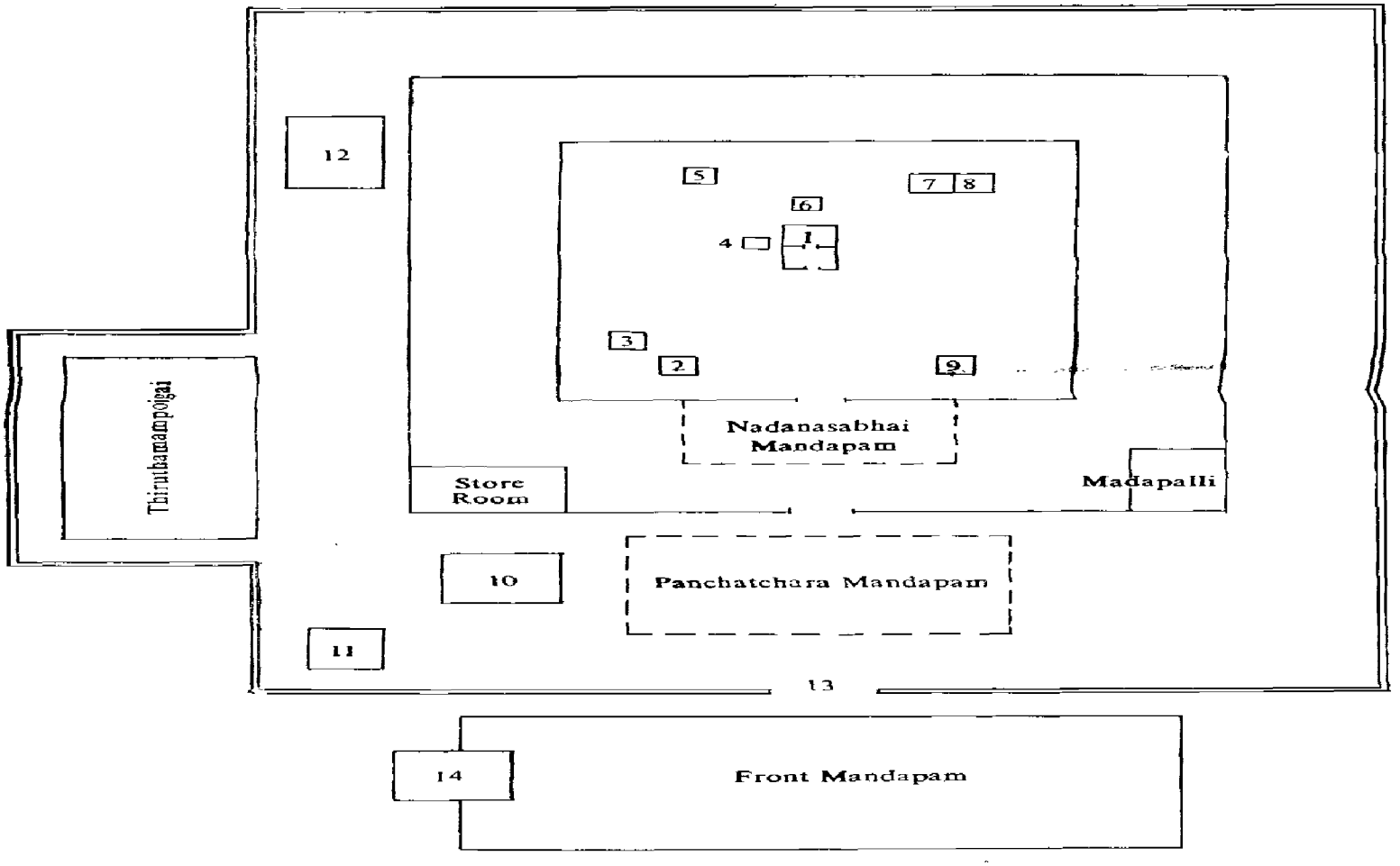
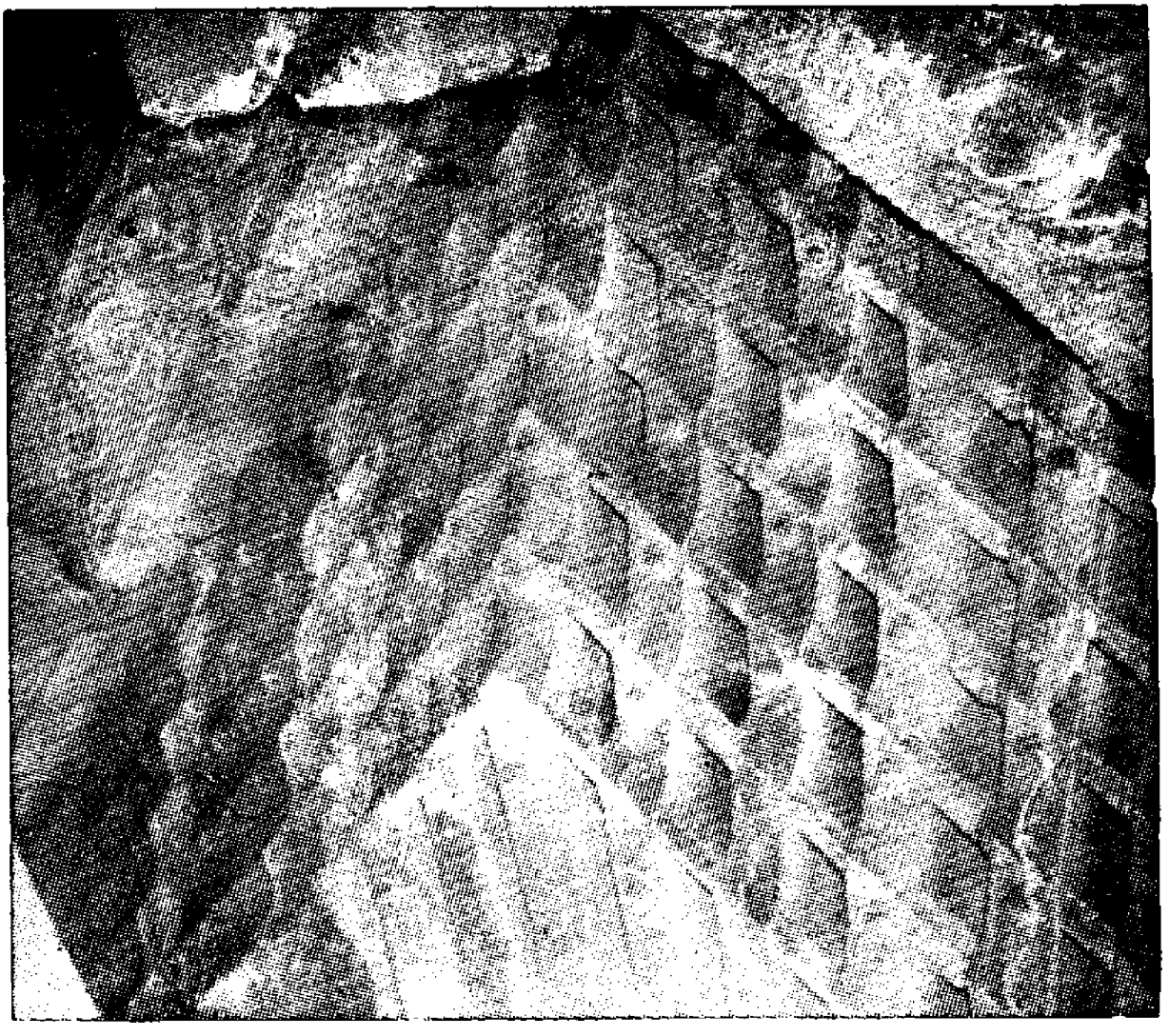
6. Karundhamoolam
7. Thiruvasagakkoil
8. Natarajar
9. Subramaniar
10. Sivanandha Manickavasagar
11. Veyiluvandha Vinayagar
12. Thyagaraja Mandapam
13. Raja Gopuram
14. Manickavasagar (Moolavar)

SRI ATHMANATHASWAMY TEMPLE

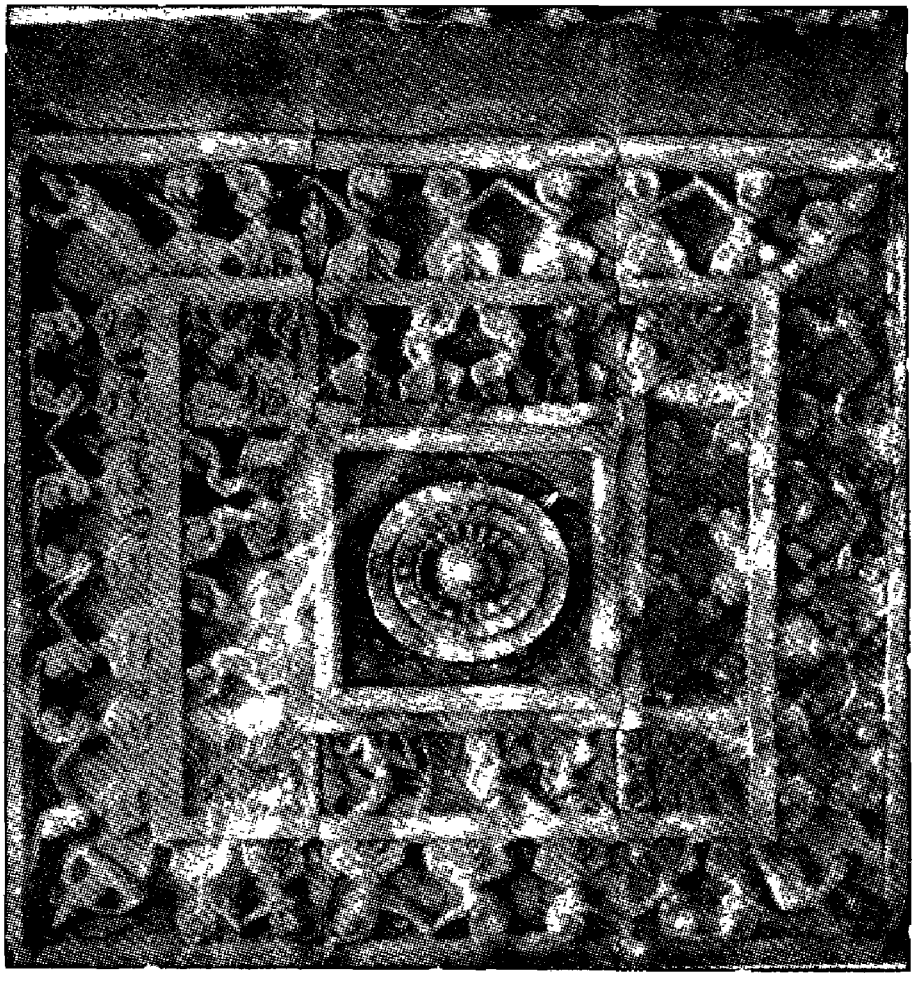
AVADAYARKOIL

(Not to Scale)

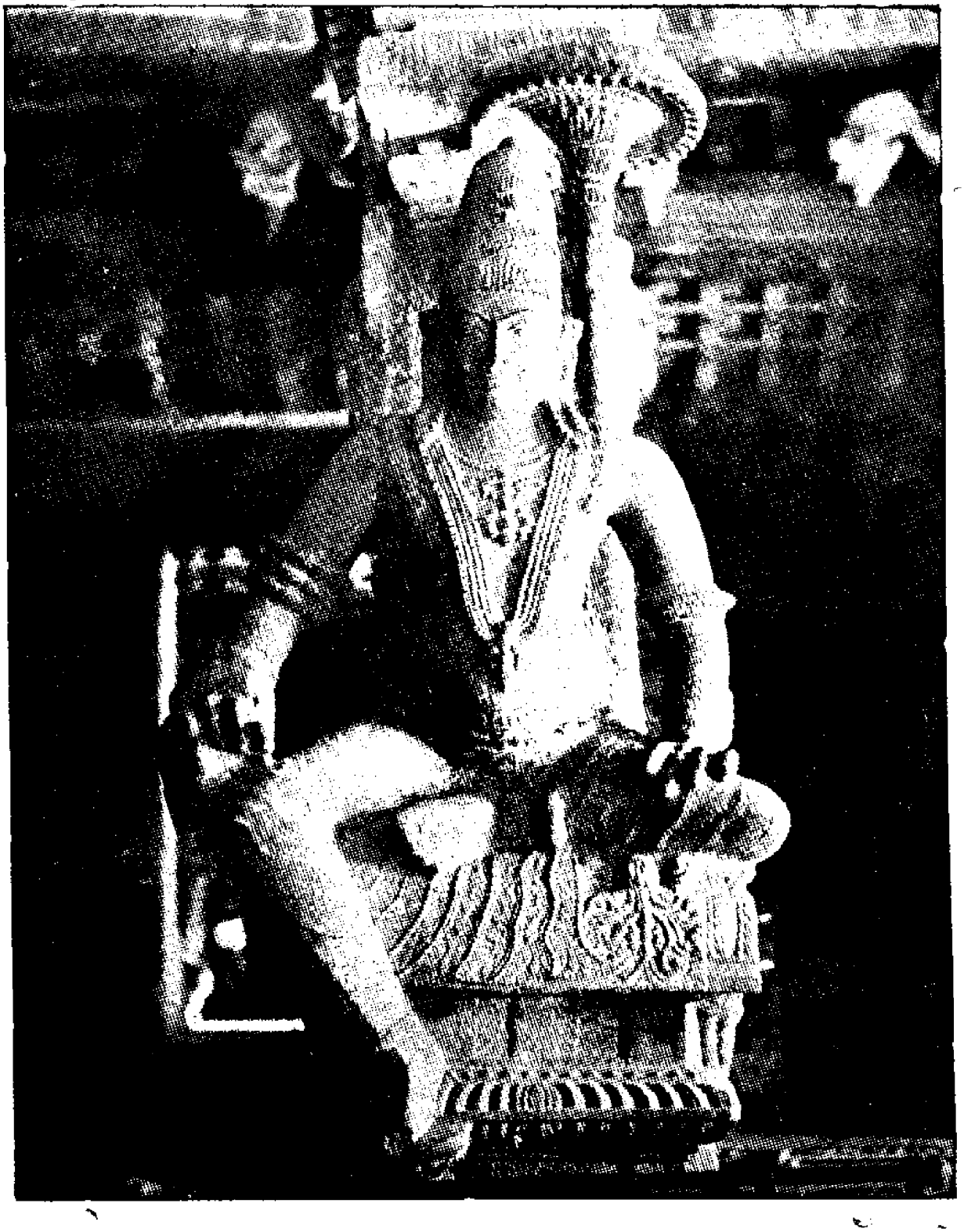




Kodungai (Rafters) in stone which resembles wood
Sri Athmanathaswamy Temple
Avadayarkoil.



A view of the Ceiling at
Sri Athmanathaswamy Temple
Avadayarkoil.



Arimardhana Pandyan
Sri Athmanathaswamy Temple
Avadayarkoil

Saint Manickavasagar
Sri Athmanathaswamy Temple
Avadayarkoil

Thandavam is depicted on the third pillar on which Karaikkal Ammaiyar is seen standing in a corner. The fourth pillar has the figure of Bikshadanar and on the fifth pillar one sees the figure of Dhanurthara Subramania. In the sixth pillar there is the Rishaba Rudra and in the seventh pillar there is the figure of Sankaranarayana. The extremely delicate chiselling of the "Kodungais" are carved in the mandapams and the exquisite carvings of the various images seen on the pillars are indeed things of beauty and bear testimony to the talents of the Sthapathis of the later Ninth Century A. D.

This is another mandapam here which contains sculptures of horses with riders. There is a figure of the Lord here on a horse and on the opposite side there is the figure of Manickavasagar. The next mandapam is the Nadana Mandapam. It is said that there was a gap between the two mandapams and that they were connected in later years by the Rajas of Ramnad and Pudukkottai as their statues are found here. Here again some sculptural depictions attract attention, the chief among them being those of the hunter and huntress. There is an artistic Deepa Sthambam in stone about seven feet in height with seven sets of lamps.

A noteworthy feature of this shrine is that there is no Lingam in the sanctum sanctorum which contains only the base that goes by the name "Avadayar". Hence the name "Avadayar Koil" to this place. Sri Athmanathar is the name of the presiding deity here and the Goddess and Her idol who does not have a form goes by the name of Siva Yoga Nayagy. It is said that the Lord gave darshan to Manickavasagar below the Sthala Viruksha "*Kurunthai*" Tree which is therefore held very sacred. To avoid the ravages of nature the trunk of this tree has been copperplated and preserved. Thus in Avadayar Koil everything is connected with Sri Manickavasagar. Inside this temple there is a statue of Manickavasagar which is worshipped with all ceremonial rites and rituals. One sees him here in various forms such as Minister, Saint and Recluse. It is also said that he spent most of his days at *Utharakosamangai* and Avadayar Koil and built this famous temple here. All the festivals celebrated here are in his honour. This shrine was

renovated and a grand Kumbabishegam performed by Sri La Sri Ambalavana Desiga Swamigal, the tenth Mahasannidhanam of Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam. It is now under the management of Sri Subramania Desiga Paramacharya Swamigal, the twenty-first Mahasannidhanam who convened in 1964 the "*Thiruvachaga Maha Nadu*" in memory of Saint Manickavasagar. The Sthalapuranam of this shrine in Tamil has been edited by Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai of Tiruchirapalli.

The popular offering here is cooked rice which is placed on a big platform in front of the Lord's sanctum. The ancient jewels of the temple in gold, silver and diamond are worth about Rs. 4,52,000 of which the stone studded golden crown and the golden "Kuvalai" deserve special mention. The temple owns extensive landed properties endowed by the ancient rulers of Madurai, Thanjavur, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai and Sivaganga which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 44,200 by way of rent. This sum is utilised towards the daily poojas and periodical festivals of the temple and for its maintenance and upkeep. The temple also gets an additional annual income of about Rs. 2,000 through Hundi collections.

There are two Thers (cars), a silver palanquin, a wooden palanquin, a silver rishabam and other vahanams made of wood viz., horse, suryaprabhai, Kailasa Parvatham, bootham and peacock. Of the major festivals celebrated here, the ten day Ani Thirumanjanam and Thiruvadhirai in Margazhi (December-January) are the most important when about 1,500 devotees from far and near congregate here.

There were several ancient and interesting stone inscriptions on the walls of this temple.

Because of the frequent additions and alterations made from time to time, most of them have now disappeared. The inscriptions which remain belong to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century. The few Tamil inscriptions copied in 1925 by the Epigraphy Department are not of much assistance in deciding the probable date of construction of this shrine. Most of these bear the date Saka 1524 (Subhakrit year) and record the sale

of gift of lands to the temple. It is gathered from these inscriptions that this sthalam was known as "Perundurai" and was described in survey records as "Nadu-virk-kuram", a sub-division of "Milalaikkurram."

While discussing the probable date of construction of this shrine, the Annual report of South Indian Epigraphy for 1925-1926 says:

"It is believed that the Atmanathaswamy Temple of this place was the one that was built by Manickavachaka with the State revenues entrusted to him by the Pandya King of Madurai. But unfortunately no early epigraphs are now found in the temple. As the structure seems to have undergone thorough revision the records now found engraved on the walls of the existing building do not take us earlier than Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries."

The following account extracted from the same source provides interesting reading:

"The temple is marked by a few structural peculiarities which call for some comments. It faces the south and the figures of the Goddess and of the Lingam are absent in their places and usual Agamic worship is made to the pedestals where these images would ordinarily have been installed. The images of the Parivara-devadas such as the Nandhi and Chandesar are also absent, but those of Vinayaga and Subramania are ensconced in the small niches in the gopura of the east prakara. It is not apparent how Manickavachaka who was himself devout follower of Saiva traditions could have built a temple which was not in conformity with the Agamic canons and whether the institution of worship to the pedestals instead of to the images has to be attributed to him at all as a result of his own preachings of ideal Monism"

There are some similarities in tradition between this temple and that of Chidambaram. According to the priests, this is called Atheetha Kshethram and Adhi Kailas on account of the existence of six Sabahs as against five at

Chidambaram shrine. Like Chidambaram, here also the tradition of Deva Rahasyam is in vogue in the sanctum sanctorum. Another similarity is the celebration of festivals during the months of Ani and Margazhi.

An interesting legend associating this sacred shrine with Saint Manickavasagar which is found in the Thiruvilaiyadal-puranam runs thus :

Manickavasagar was born in Vadhavur village (near Melur in Madurai district) and was called Vadhavurar. His parents' devotion to Lord Siva was so great that they were blessed with this divine child. Even in his early days he distinguished himself as an extraordinary scholar and a born genius. His fame reached the then Pandya King who sent for him and took him as his Prime Minister and conferred on him the Royal title "*Thennavan Brahmarayan*". He proved to be the jewel of the court of the Pandya King whose country began to flourish after Vadhavurar's arrival.

Entrusted with the task of buying horses for the King's Cavalry, Vadhavurar started on his mission with huge state funds at his disposal and on his way he arrived at the place now called Avadayarkoil. He was so much struck by the sanctity of the shrine that he halted there indefinitely forgetful of his mission and spent the entire state funds in re-building the temple of Avadayarkoil. News reached the Pandya King that his Prime Minister had squandered the State funds in this manner. The indignant King ordered that he be arrested and brought to Madurai.

Manickavasagar prayed to Lord Athmanathar for succour. His prayers were heard and the Lord cheered him up and advised him to go and inform the Pandya King that horses had already been purchased and were on their way to the capital city of Madurai. The Saint, when produced before the King mentioned accordingly.

Several thousands of horses miraculously arrived at Madurai and the King was appreciative of the work of his

Prime Minister in having secured horses of such dazzling beauty. The later was greatly relieved and he praised the Lord for having saved him from the royal wrath, but his relief did not last long since all the horses turned into Jackals overnight and caused havoc to the citizens. The King again got angry with Manickavasagar attributing all these incidents to his black magic. Manickavasagar was again imprisoned and harassed.

Presently the Lord wished to bring to the notice of the Pandya King the saintliness of his Prime Minister. He therefore caused huge floods in the River Vaigai which began to devastate the country. The King ordered that every family should lend a hand in repairing the breaches caused by the floods. A helpless old woman knew not how to make her contribution. Lord Siva took the form of a cooly and volunteered to work on her behalf and she accepted his services in return for a few doles of *Puttu* (cooked sweet flour). The King who was going round the workspot found this divine cooly not too quick in this work. He, therefore. chastised him and whipped him. All the citizens felt this blow on their backs. Presently the cooly disappeared and a celestial voice declared, "Oh King! Know the greatness of Manickavasagar, your Prime Minister. He is a precious jewel and my devotee. It was I who asked him to spend your wealth for building the temple at Avadayarkoil. You will have all the money returned to your treasury and all horses restored to you. My blessings to you". The floods subsided and happiness was restored in the country.

According to the legend such was the greatness of Sri Manickavasagar, the chief architect of this famous shrine. The management of this shrine vests with the Adheenakartha of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam who is the Hereditary Trustee of the temple.

VILANOOR

Sri Pambani Ambigai Temple

The Panchayat of Vilanoor is situated at a distance of twenty kilometres from Arantangi which is the nearest railway station to this place. The place can also be reached by bus. According to 1961 Census, the Panchayat had a population of 1,184. This place is famous for its small temple dedicated to Goddess "Pambani Ambigai".

Though the origin of the temple is lost in obscurity, it is reported by the people of the locality that it is not less than 200 years old and was constructed only by the people of the locality. The Goddess has been so named because a five-headed serpent is found to spread its hood over the main idol of the Goddess. The Goddess is believed to be very powerful. Her worship is considered to be very efficacious in curing snake bites and other piosonous infections. In fact, the people believe that many serpents live in the vicinity of the temple, but they never harm the devotees coming to worship the shrine.

Many devotees resort to this shrine every Friday with their offering in cash and kind. Food grains, goats, calves, fowls and peacocks are presented as offerings which fetch an annual income of Rs. 2,000.

Poojas are performed twice a day by a poojari who is selected from the "Asari" community of the village. Rice Pongal is offered to the Goddess during each pooja.

The temple owns five acres of wet lands, the income from which is used for the maintenance of the temple and the conduct of poojas. The temple owns jewels costing Rs. 5,000 and some wooden vahanams which are used during the festivals.

A Trustee appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department manages the affairs of the temple.

THIRUPPUNNAIVASAL

Sri Viruthapureeswarar Temple

Thiruppunnaivasal is a village situated at a distance of forty kilometres from Arantangi railway station. The place is connected by bus with Arantangi to Pattukkottai. According to the 1961 Census, this Panchayat has a population of 1,773 persons. The ancient Saivite temple dedicated to Viruthapureeswarar exists in the Thiruppunnaivasal village of this Panchayat.

This temple which faces east and covers an area of 2·83 acres is believed to have been constructed during the period of the famous Pandya Kings. Sri Chidambaram Chettiar, a philanthropist of Devakottai is said to have renovated it about sixty-five years ago. The temple has derived its name from the sacred "Punnai" Tree which is the "Sthala Viruksham". It has a single prakaram and two sancta. There is a massive compound wall on all sides. The gopuram at the main entrance is a picturesque one. The presiding deity is called Viruthapureeswarar or Pazhampathinathar, a Swayambu Lingam about nine feet in height considered to be second in size only to the Lingam of Sri Bragadheeswarar in Thanjavur. The divine consort is Sri Brahannayagi Amman whose sanctum is on the northern side of the Lord's sanctum sanctorum. The icon of the Goddess recalls to one's mind the idols of Goddess Meenakshi at Madurai and Devi Kanyakumari. Opposite to this sanctum is the Mottai Gopuram entrance which always remains closed. The shrine of Kudavarai Kaliamman who is famous for Her miraculous powers is inside. A trident representing this Goddess is placed at the entrance to the gopuram for worship by the devotees.

The temple is believed to be a very ancient one and legend has it that Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma, Goddess Parvathi and other Gods like Indra, Surya, Chandra, Yama, Vayu and Ayravatha and Sage Agasthya had offered worship at this shrine. Saints Sambandhar and Sundarar had worshipped the Lord of this shrine and composed several verses in His praise.

Poojas are performed six times daily by non-hereditary Brahmin priests according to the principles of the Kamika Agamam.

Landed properties of the temple comprise 156·19 acres of wet and 138·91 acres of dry lands which fetch an annual income of about Rs. 36,000. This income is used for the daily rituals, periodical festivals and general maintenance of the temple. The temple has also antique jewellery estimated to cost about Rs. 51,300 which are mostly donated by devotees. The annual Hundi collections come to about Rs. 200 while the income from charges collected for Archana and Abishegam comes to Rs. 300 per annum. Two temple cars, five rathams, a palanquin and about twelve vahanams are owned by the temple.

The Brahmothsavam for ten days in the month of Vaikasi is the most famous among the festivals of the temple which draws a crowd of a lakh of devotees from far and near.

An Executive Officer and a Board of three Trustees appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department manage the affiairs of the temple.

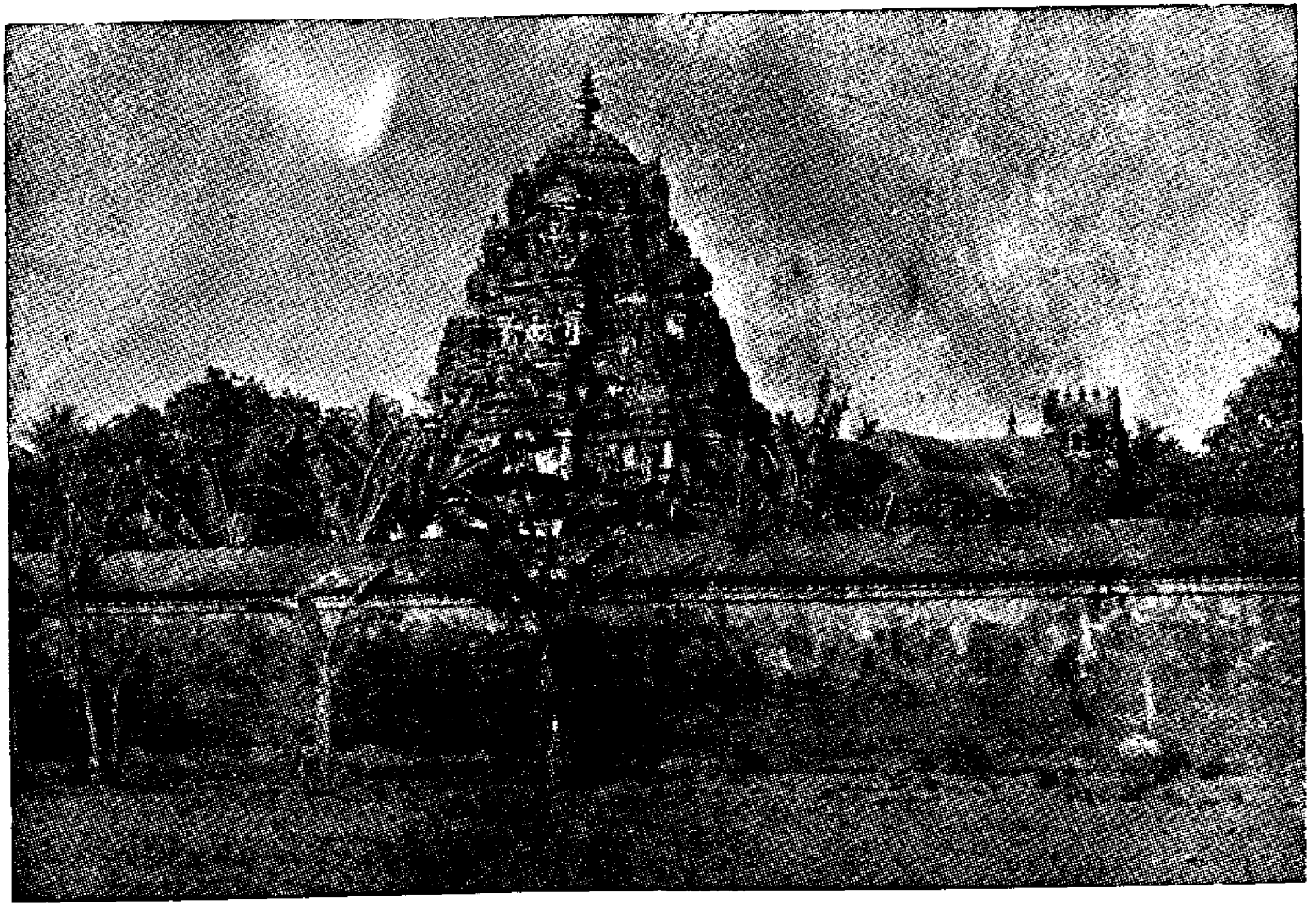
OTHER TEMPLES OF THE TALUK

Arantangi Taluk has other temples which though not so important as those described earlier still deserve a brief mention.

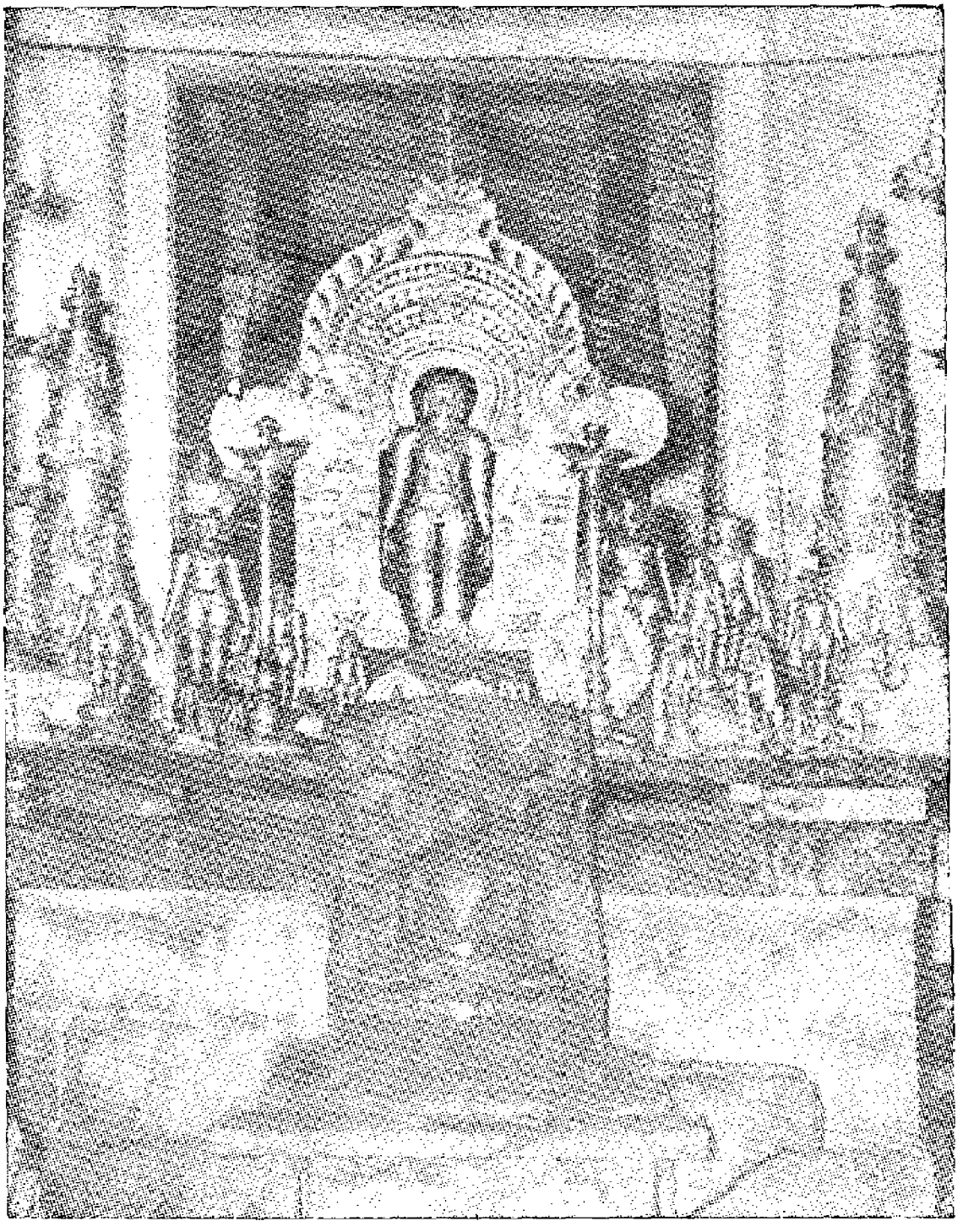
The temple dedicated to Rajendra Choleswara which is supposed to have been built in the Eleventh Century at Arantangi is one such temple. The ancient temple of Meiyar Ayyanar at Narpavalakodi, ten kilometres away from Arantangi is famous and according to an inscription in the temple it was constructed by one Kala Mahamuni. Ayyanar is considered to be a powerful deity for obtaining whose grace devotees from nearby villages, throng to the place during the Chithira Pournami festival

celebrated annually for ten days. Devotees carry Kavadis to propitiate the deity and arrange for poor feeding on the occasion.

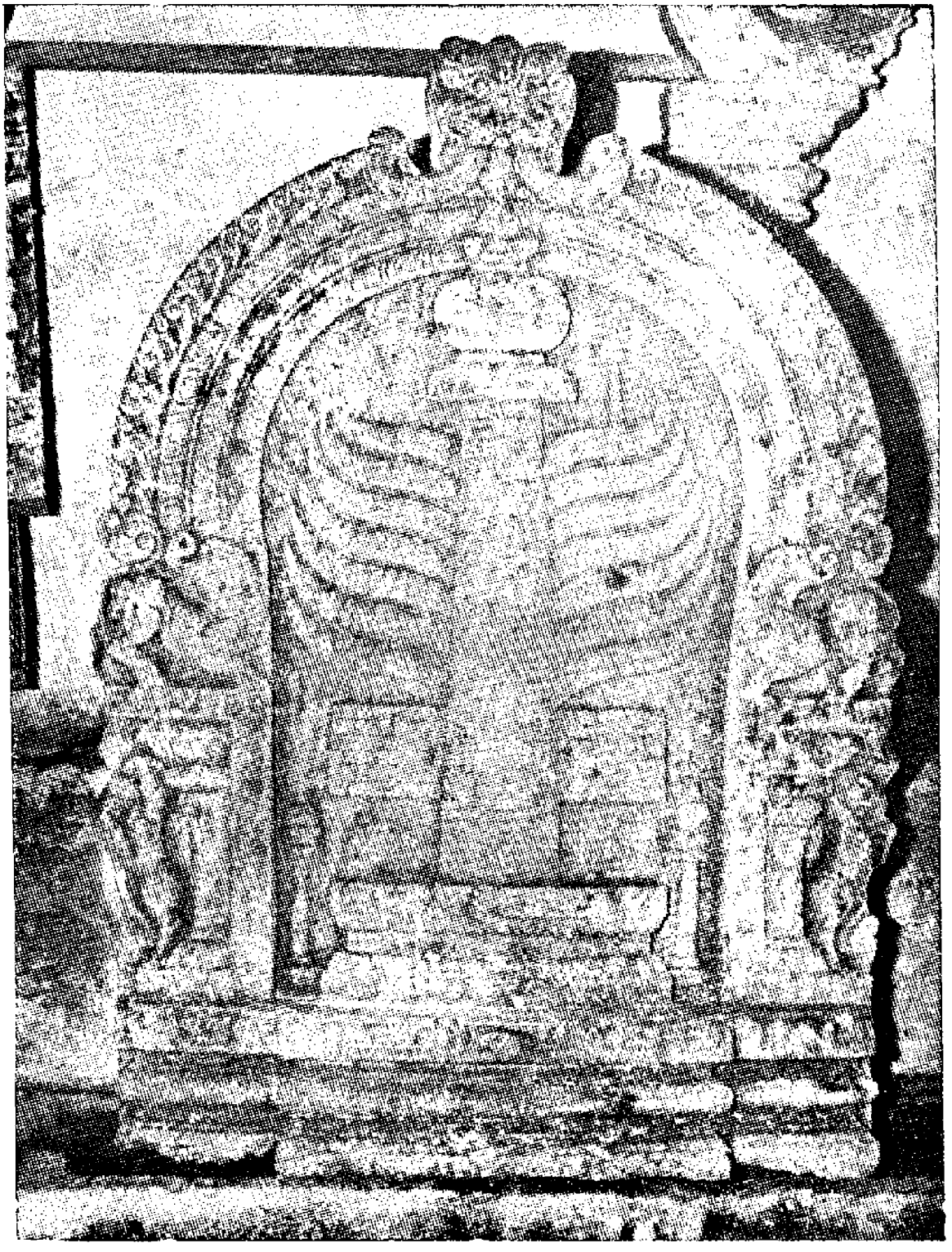
The temple dedicated to Sri Sundararaja Perumal and Alamelu Mangai at Ponpethi village about thirty kilometres from Arantangi is yet another shrine well known in the taluk. Another noteworthy temple is the one at Chatrapatnam, hamlet of Memisal village, thirty-five kilometres away from Arantangi which is dedicated to Sri Arjunavaneswaraswamy and His divine consort to Sri Brahathkuchambal. Both these temples are suppo sed to have been built by the Mahratta Kings of Thanjavur.



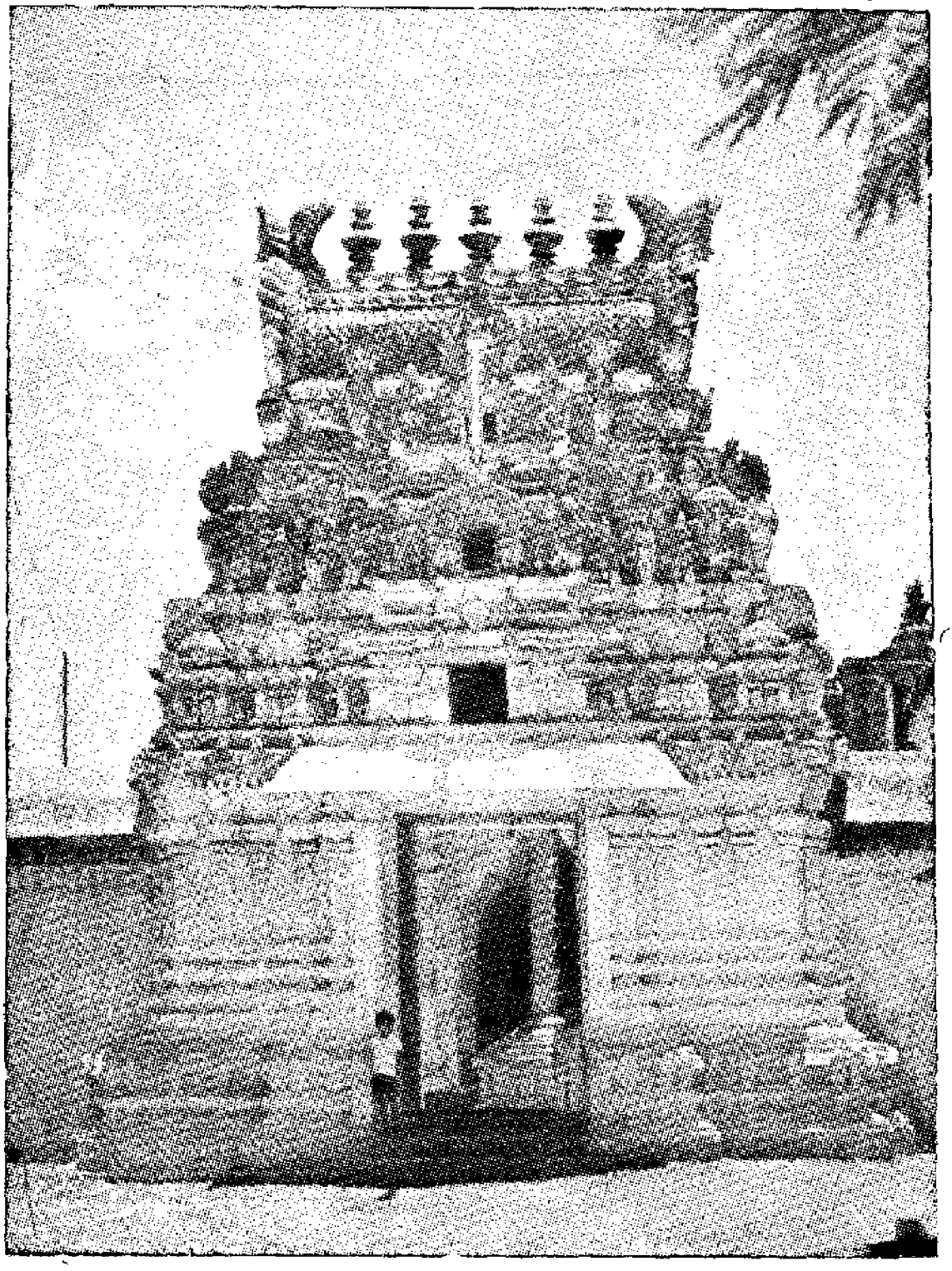
A view of the Temple
Sri Adhi Bhagavan alias Deepanadhaswamy Jeenalayam, Deepangudi



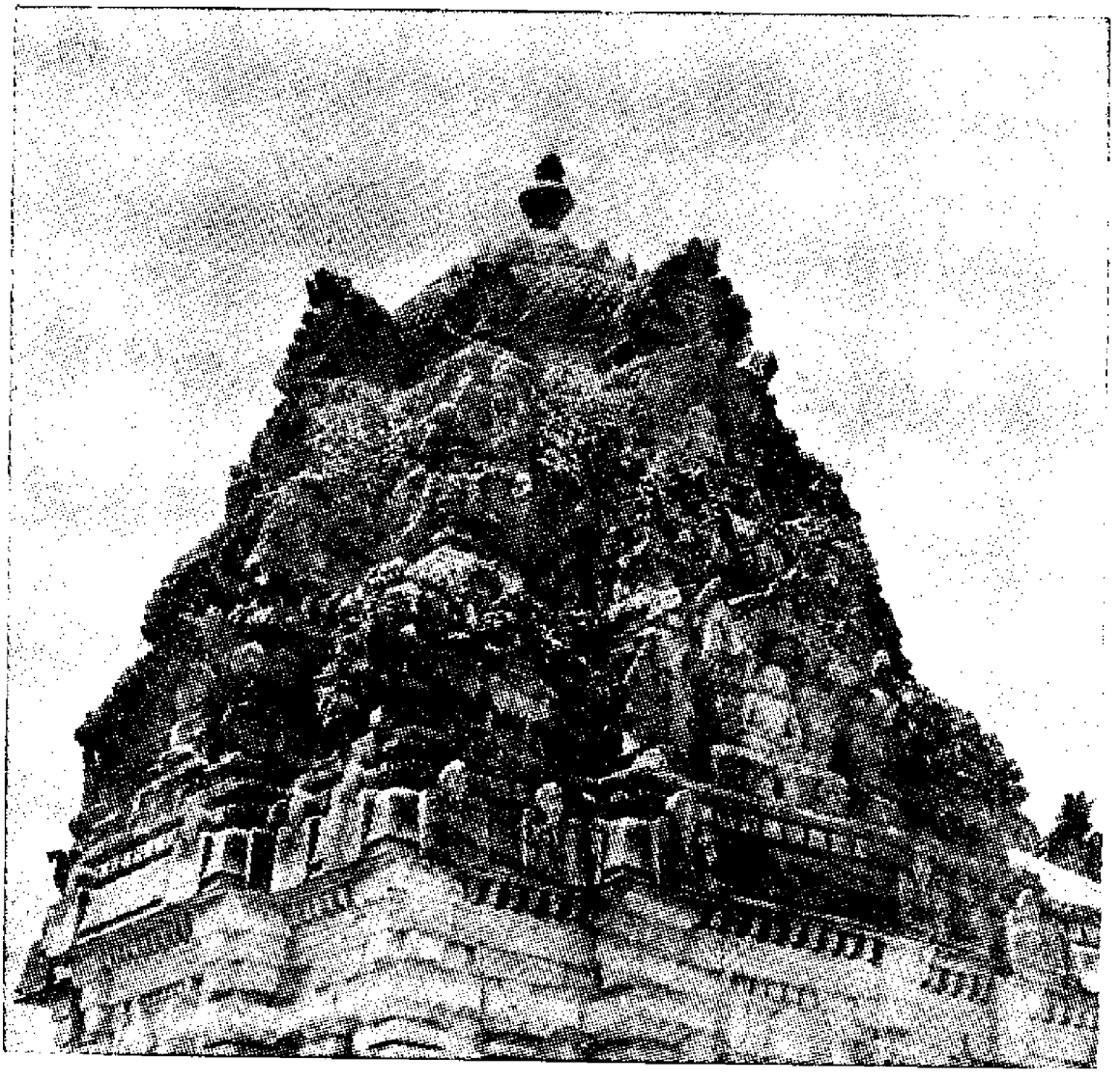
Sri Adhi Bhagavan alias Deepanadhaswamy
at the Jeenalayam.
Deepangudi.



Sri Saraswathi Amman
Sri Adhi Bhagavan alias Deepanadhaswamy Jeenalayam,
Deepangudi.



Front Gopuram at
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



Vimanam at
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
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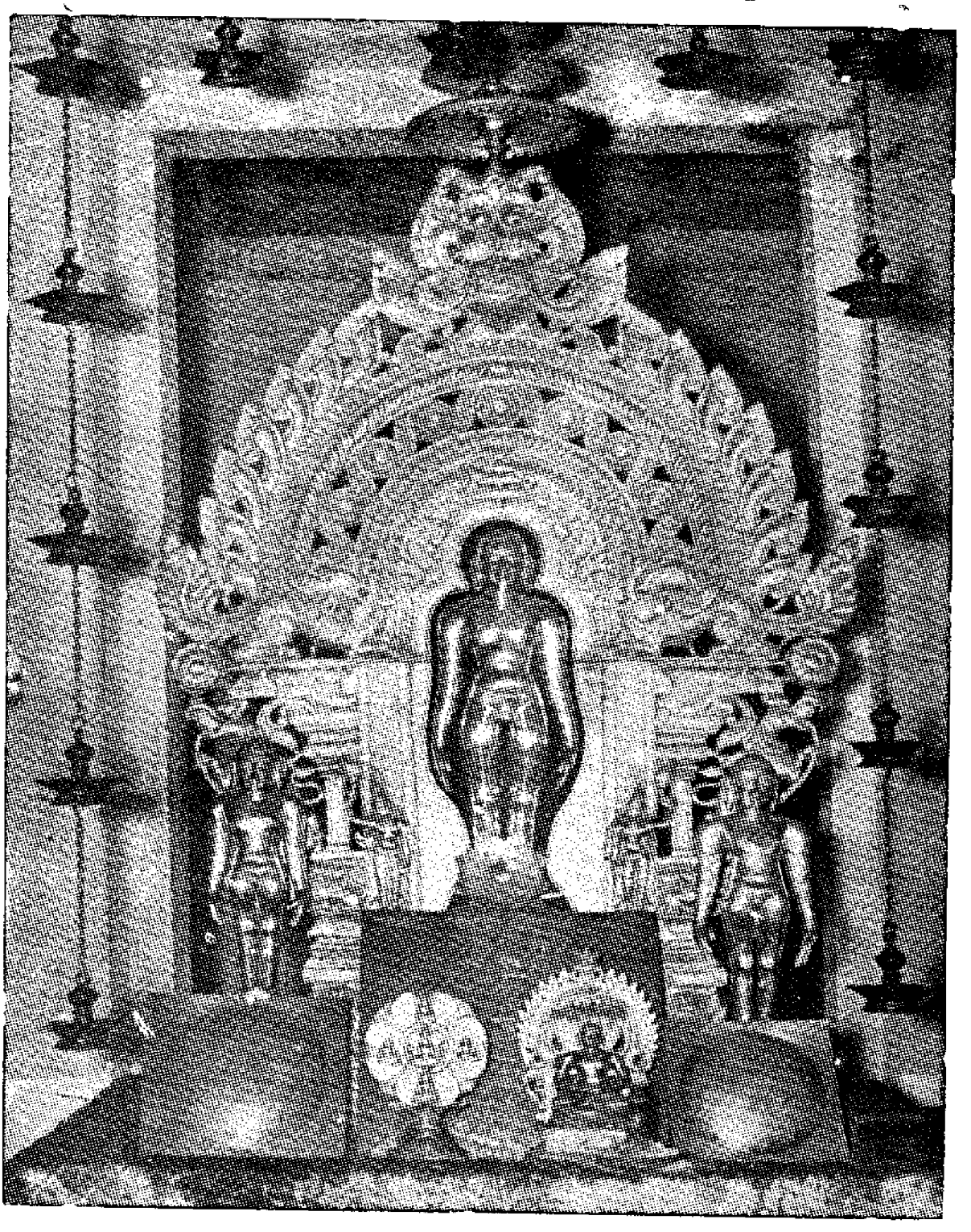
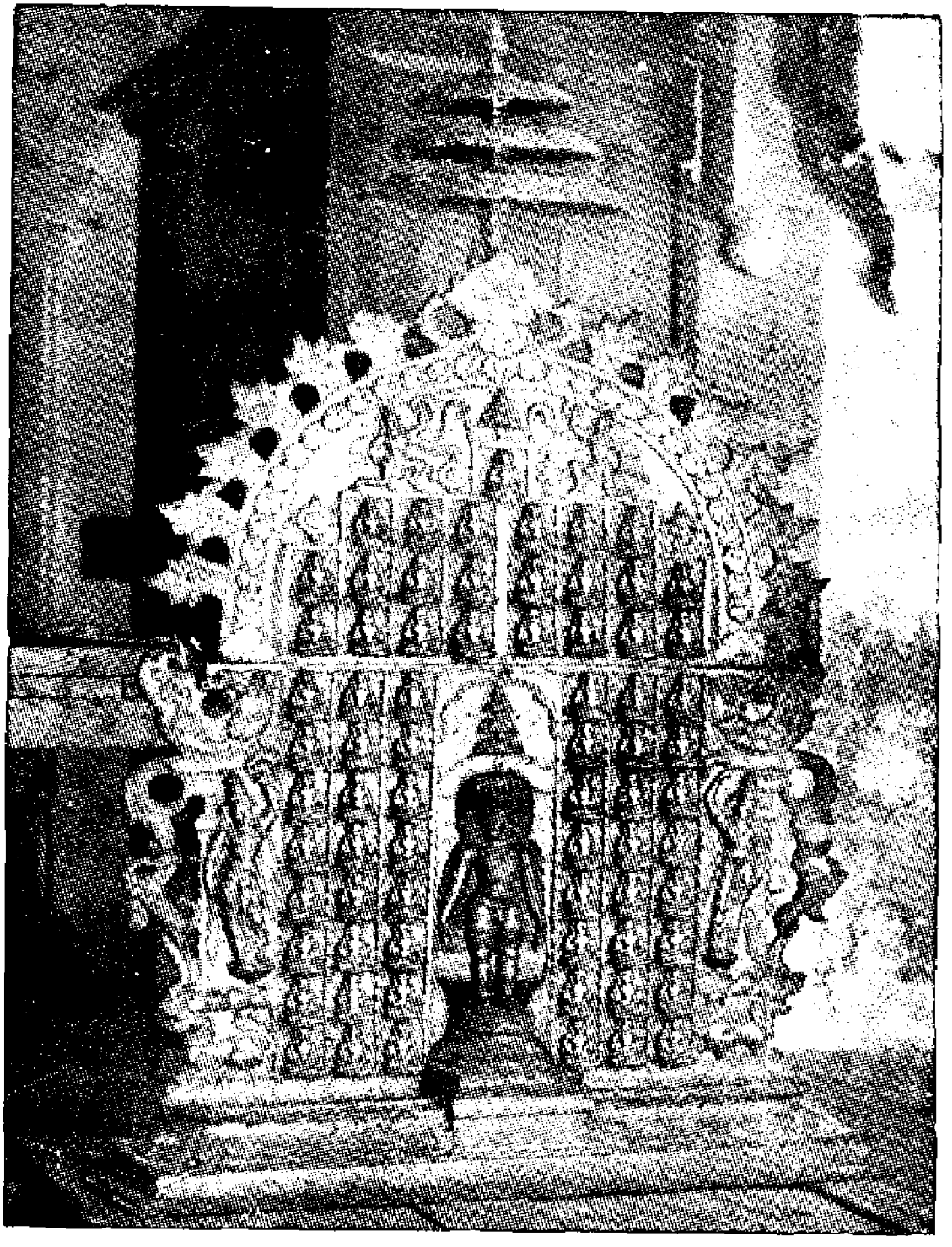
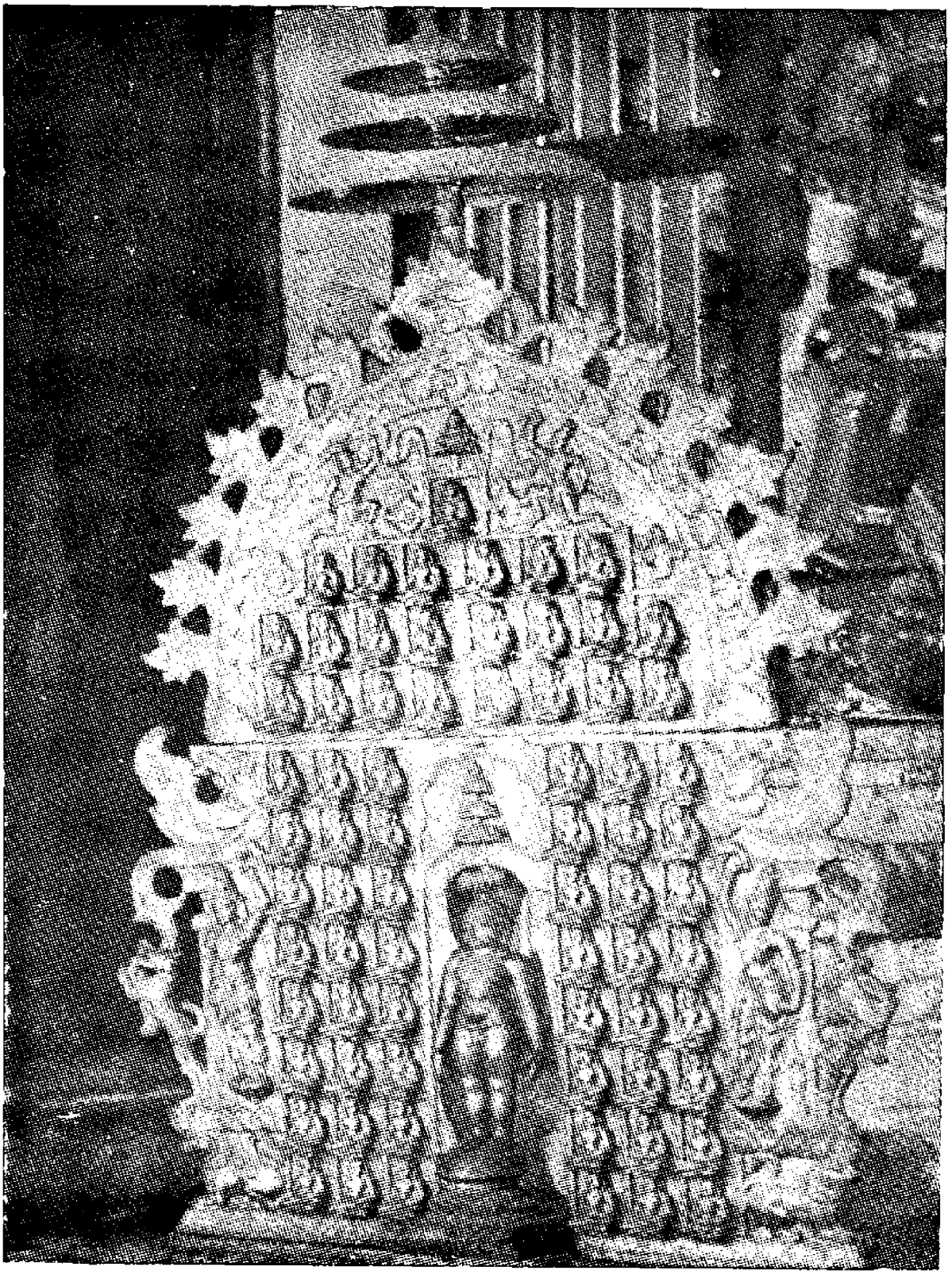


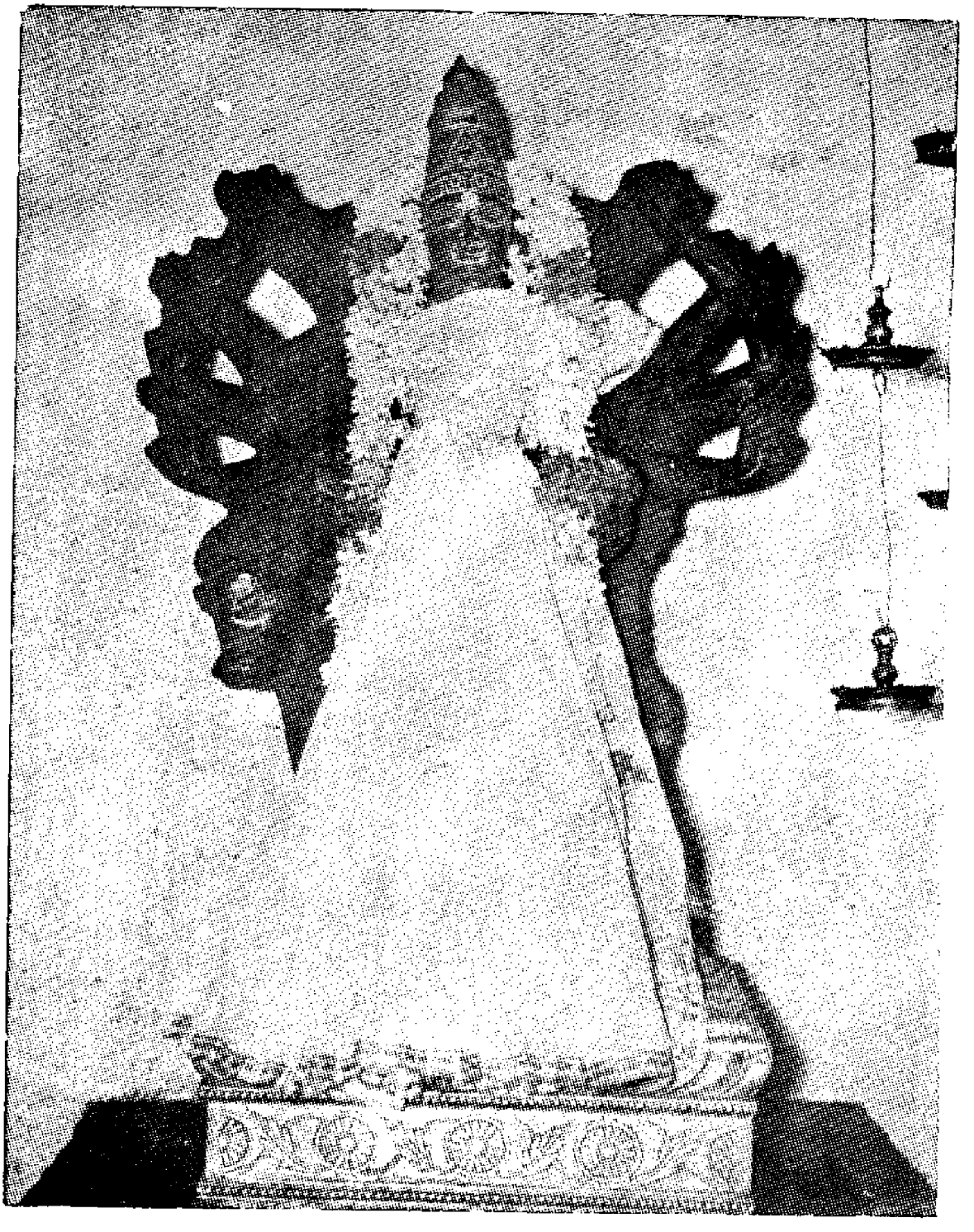
Sri Mallitheerthankarar at
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



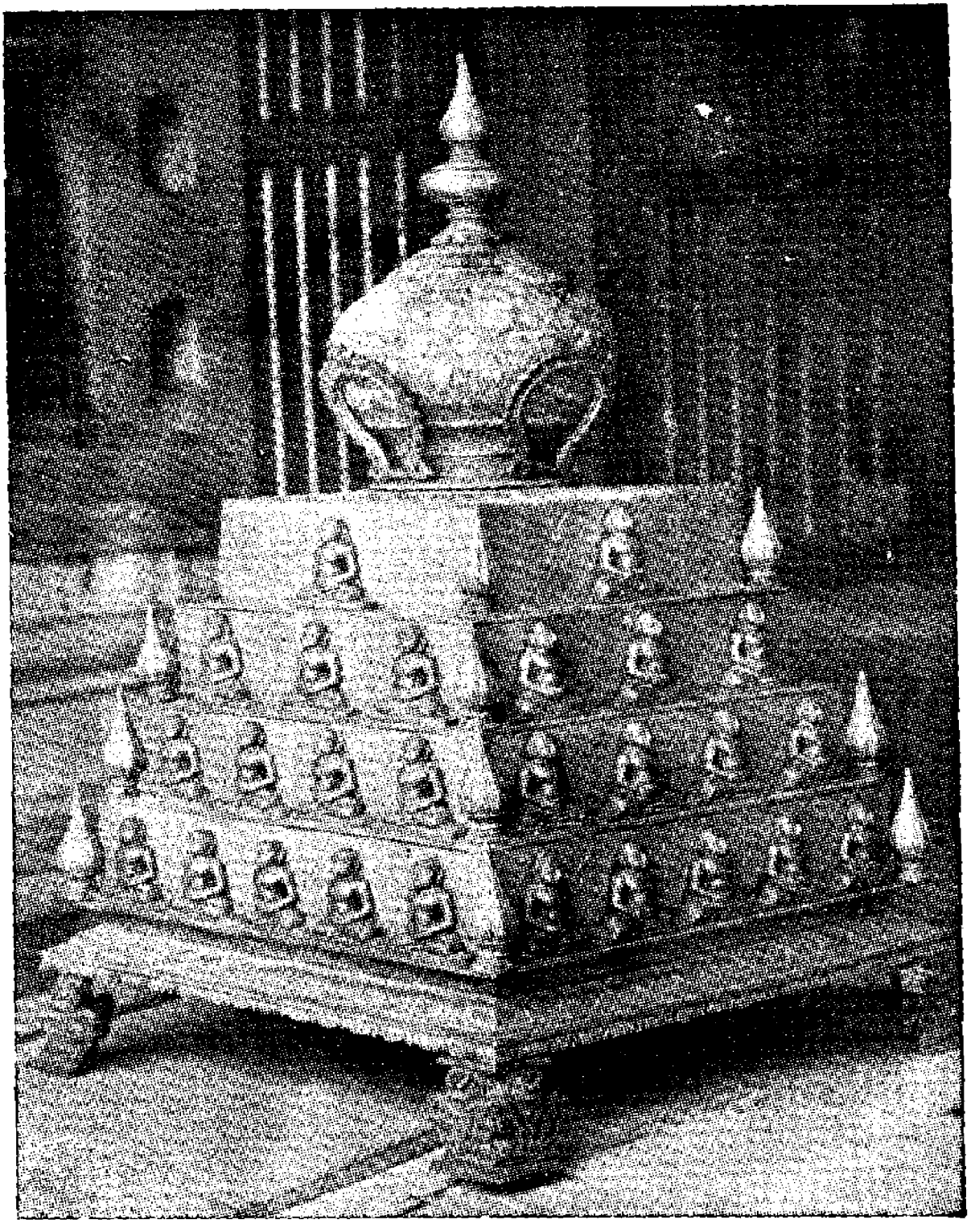
Sri Trikala Theerthankarar (Front View)
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



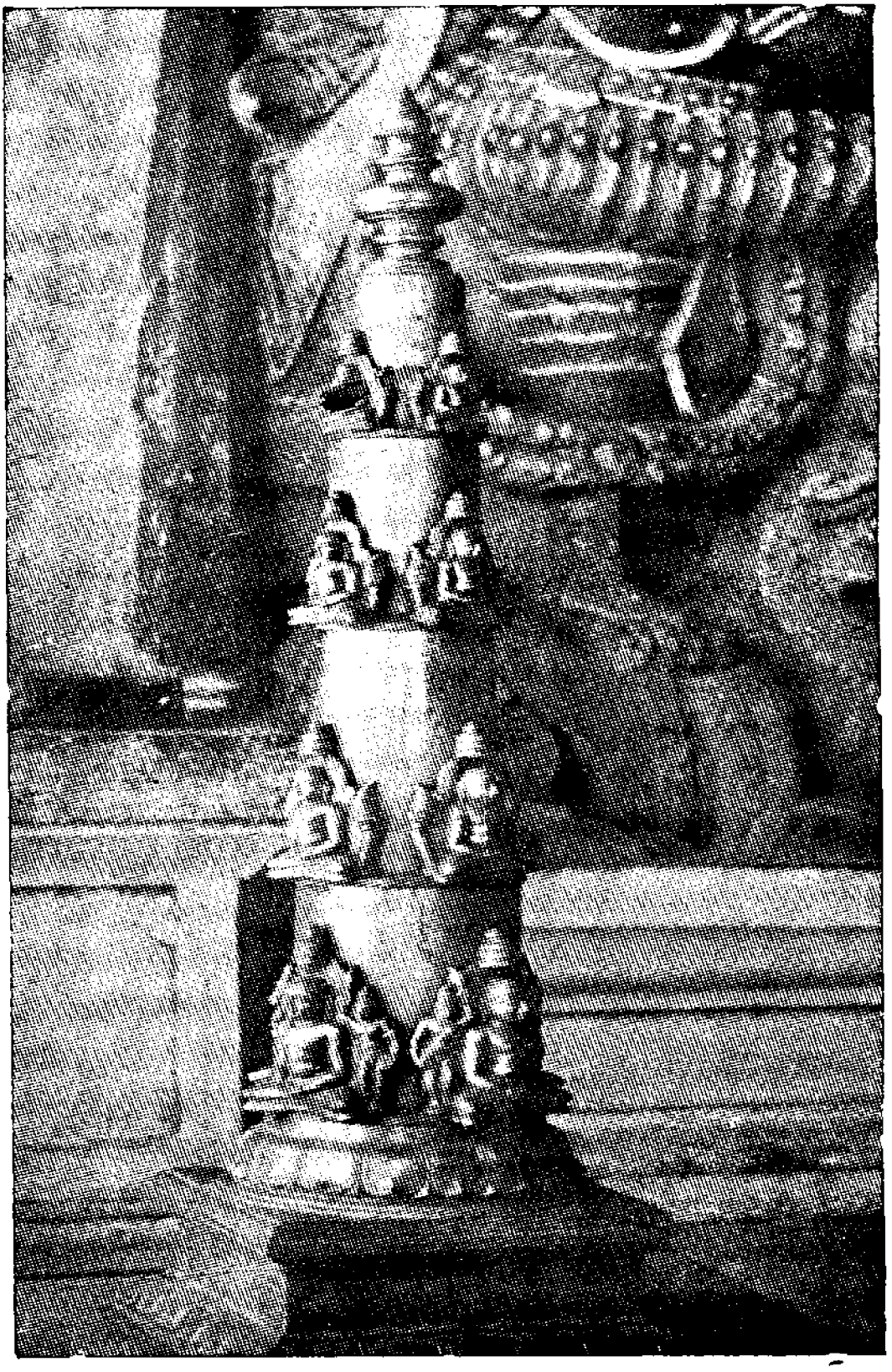
Sri Trikala Theerthankarar (Front view)
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



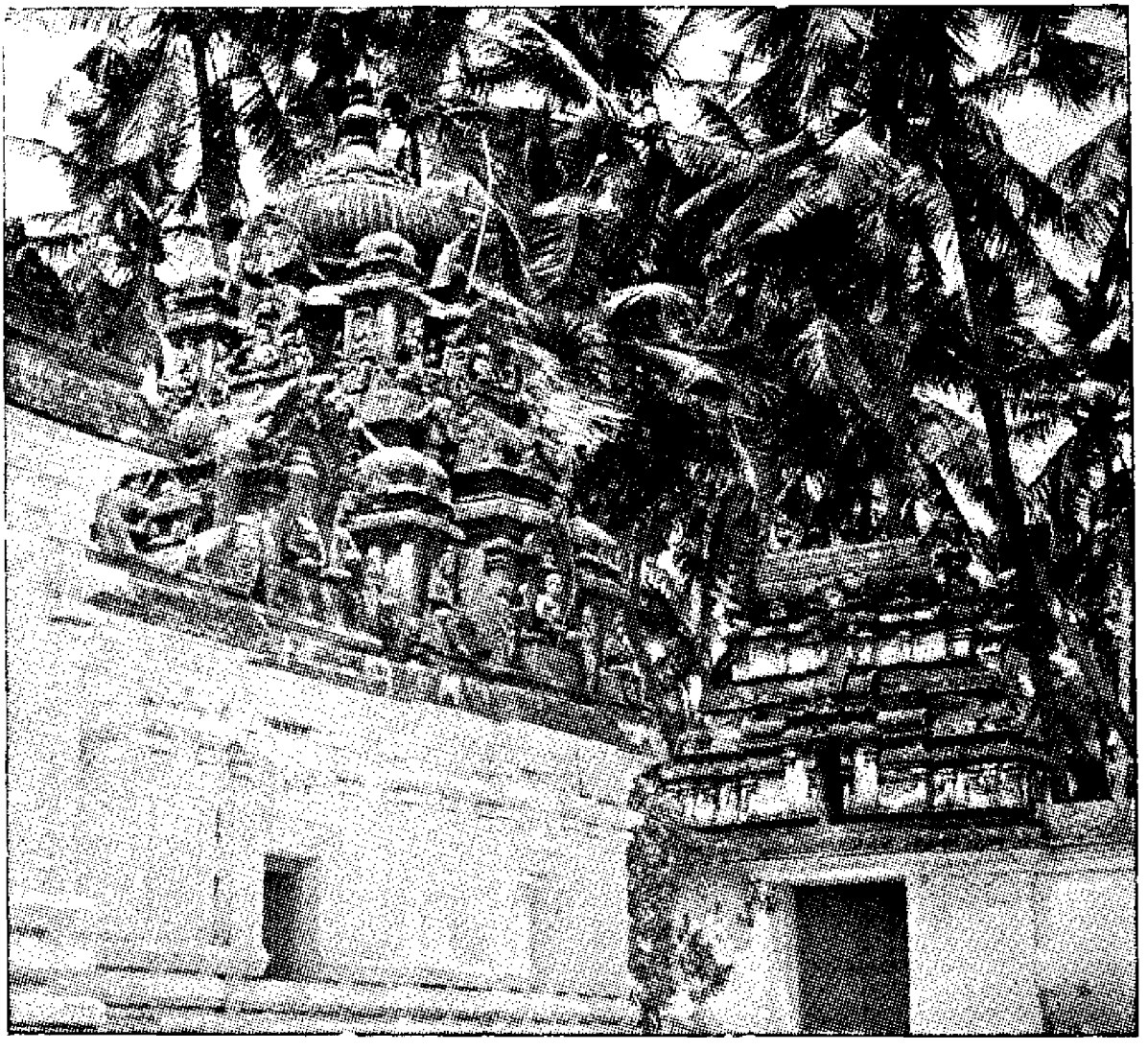
Sri Padmavathi Amman
Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



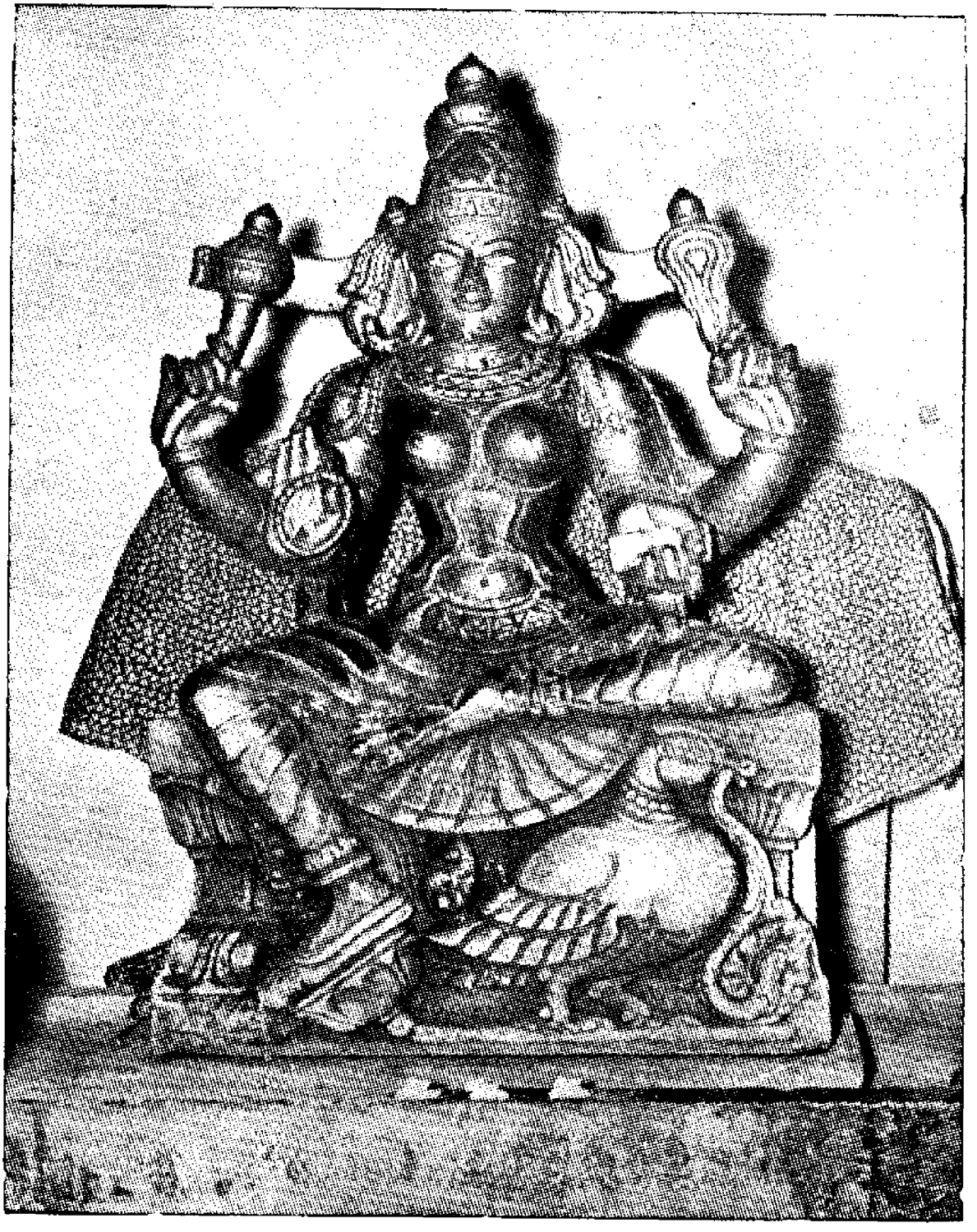
The Meru Parvatham
Sri Mallinadhaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



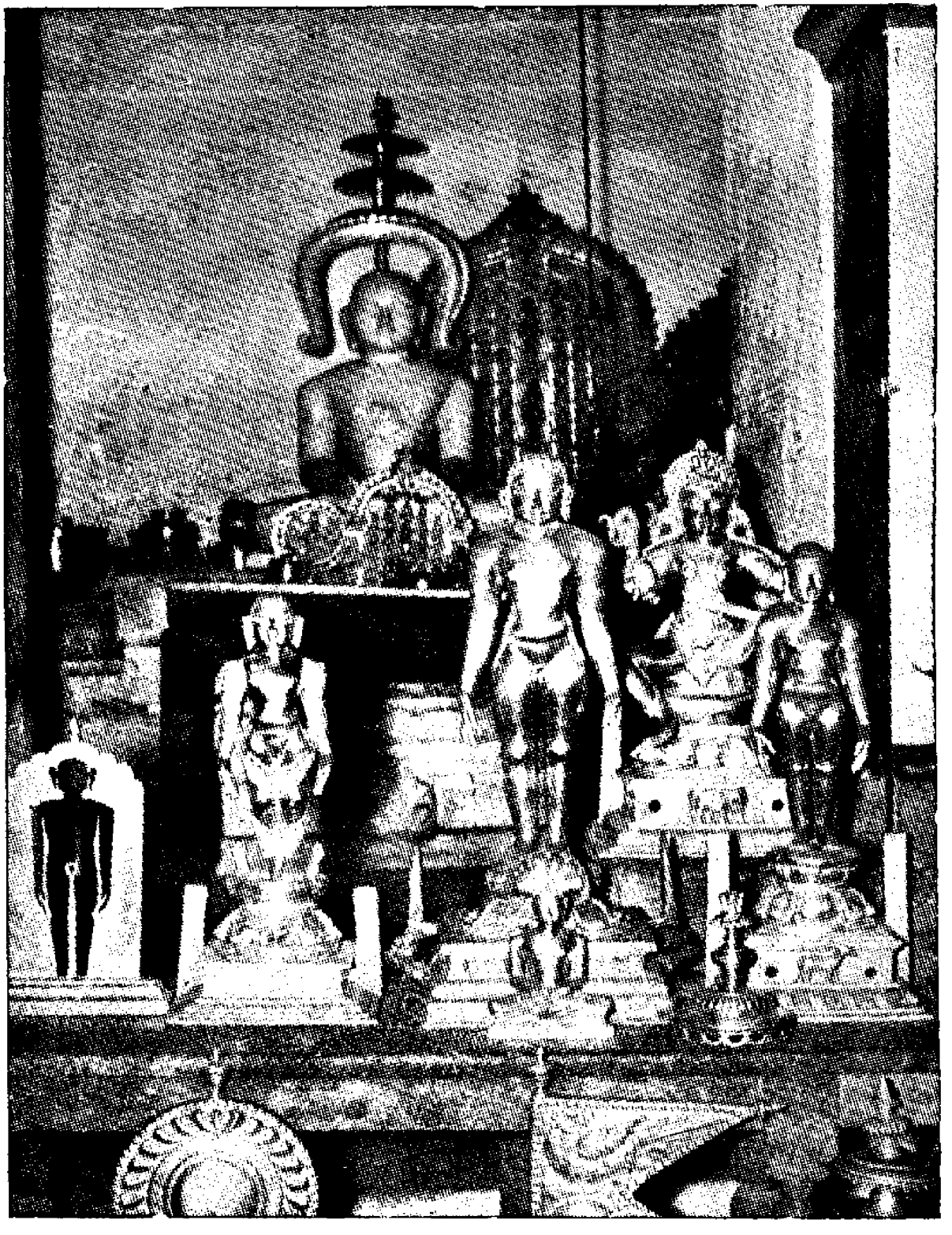
The Nandheeswarar Deepam
Sri Mallinadhaswamy Jeenalayam,
Mannargudi.



Vimanam at
Sri Adhinadhar Jain Temple
Karunthattangudi, Thanjavur.



Sri Saraswathi Amman
Sri Adhinadhar Jain Temple
Karunthattangudi, Thanjavur.



Sri Chandra Prabhaswamy and Mahavirar
Sri Chandranathaswamy Temple
Kumbakonam.

JAIN TEMPLES

It is well known that in ancient Tamil Nadu, Jainism had a good following. The contribution made to Tamil literature by Jain poets and writers is impressive. It is surprising that there are only a few Jain temples in Tanjore District in Deepangudi, Mannargudi, Karunthattangudi and Kumbakonam. These temples follow the general architectural styles of other Hindu temples, with of course, some touches characteristic of Jainism.

The temple at Deepangudi in Nannilam Taluk is a fairly big one. It is a regular place of worship for the large number of Jain families of this village. Jayankondan, the author of *Kalingathuparani*, hailed from this place.

Sri Mallinathaswamy Jeenalayam at Mannargudi is a Jain temple, located in the midst of a Jain residential locality. It is also a regular place of worship. Karunthattangudi near Tanjore is another place with a Jain shrine.

Apart from these important Jain centres, there exist some towns and villages, where Jains live in numbers and have their places of worship. They are at Tanjore, Vedharanyam, Animathikudi, Kilapadugai, Thiruvaiyaru, Thozhuvanangudi, Kumbakonam, Nagapattinam, Thopputhorai and at Amur. Some of these shrines are in good condition, while some others are dilapidated.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES

There are surprisingly few temples for Buddha in Thanjavur District. A large number of statues (Bronze) of Buddha found at Nagapattinam are now at the Government Museum at Madras. Some of these statues are said to be of Seventh or Eighth Century A.D. and some of them belong to Eleventh or Twelfth Century. These probably belong to the Buddhist shrine, built by Narasimhavarman, the Pallava King for the benefit of Buddhist traders from China. What Marco Polo, the Venetian Traveller refers to as a Chinese Shrine for Buddha at Nagapattinam is probably this temple.

Apart from the sculptured Buddha on the walls of Bragadheeswarar Temple at Thanjavur, the only place where there is a separate temple for Buddha is at Perunjeri, a village five miles from Mayavaram. This temple is perhaps the only remnant of the Buddhist viharas said to have existed in the Fifth Century A.D. in Mayavaram, which is referred in ancient works as Majura Patnam. The statue in Perunjeri is of a height 5′ 3″ and it is called Rishi Koil. It carries an inscription on the pedestal confirming that it is a Buddha Statue. The impressive features of this statue is "Lamba Kana", with the long ear lobes stretched out. The figure is in a Samadhi posture.

THE SHRINE BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF VELANKANNI

VELANKANNI

Velankanni is a small village on the shore of the Bay of Bengal situated at about ten kilometres south of Nagapattinam in the district of Thanjavur. It is well known for the Basilica Roman Catholic Church of "Our Lady of Health", which is visited not only by Christians but also Hindus, from various parts of the country. The famous Velankanni festival popularly known as the "Feast", which takes place every eighth of September and the nine preceding days in honour of Virgin Mary, attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over India, Burma, Ceylon and other parts of the world without any distinction of caste, creed and colour in the hope of obtaining relief from sickness. The village has consequently been called the "Lourdes of India".

The population of Velankanni according to Census 1961 is 3,001. The village can be approached by four different routes from Nagapattinam (1) by foot along the beach; (2) by boat along the canal; (3) by road along Thiruthuraipoondi road close to the canal; and (4) by going across the villages west and south of Poyyur, by the side of Uthiramadha Thope. Buses also ply frequently between Nagapattinam and Velankanni. The most interesting route for pilgrims is the one along the beach, and thousands of devotees walk through this distance.

The Sanctuary faces the sea, in the east. The river Vellayar runs close to the Church on the south. It has an imposing facade with two lofty spires pointing upwards like two angel fingers. It covers an area of 1·20 acres. Another striking

feature is the new dome connecting the four wings of the Church and this gives the appearance of a large cross. After crossing the main door, one walks up the long nave and soon finds himself before the *Miraculous Statue of Our Lady of Health, with the Infant Jesus in her arms.* It rests in an ancient niche at the high altar which is at the transept. The background is inlaid with antique porcelain plates illustrating scenes from the Old and New Testament. The high altar—Our Lady's Altar—is provided with a sanctuary proper, which is quite spacious and is enclosed on three sides with fancy rails. In the ceiling, there is a dome with several fancy multi-coloured lights which flood the Church with subdued colour. The floor of the Church is paved with black and white marble slabs.

Masses are conducted here, thrice daily by priests who are appointed by the Bishop of Tanjore. The Church has no immovable property apart from the site on which it stands. It gets an annual income of about Rs. 50,000 by way of offerings from devotees, and this amount is utilised for its day-to-day maintenance. A home for poor is being maintained by the Church.

The origin of this famous shrine remains obscure since there are not many historical records pertaining to it. We must fall back upon tradition which attributes its origin to two innocent children of Velankanni, two gentlemen from Nagapattinam and a few Portuguese sailors, all of whom were inspired by Virgin Mary herself, to whom the sanctuary is dedicated.

It is believed that some three hundred years ago, there lived a poor widow with a lame son. The widow used to put her son in charge of a stall, underneath a banyan tree, where fresh buttermilk used to be sold. On a very hot day in summer, a woman of unequalled beauty carrying a very attractive child in her arms, approached this boy and asked him for a cup of buttermilk to quench the thirst of her baby. When the request was complied with, she wanted the boy to go to Nagapattinam and inform a certain Catholic gentleman about her presence in

Velankanni. While he was pleading inability to do so because of his physical disability, he suddenly found that his lameness has been cured as if by a miracle. He ran to Nagapattinam immediately as directed. The Catholic gentleman whom he approached had a similar vision of Mary in his dream the previous night and he returned to Velankanni with the boy, where both of them were again favoured with the vision of the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus. At Her behest, the people of the locality in whom confidence was inspired by the miraculous cure of the lame boy, built a thatched chapel wherein they installed a statue of Our Lady with the Infant Jesus. Devotees believe that numerous favours were conferred on the people who came to pray there; since most of them were in the nature of cures to the disabled, the Blessed Virgin came to be popularly known as "Our Lady of Health."

According to another story, a little shepherd boy was going one day from Velankanni to Nagapattinam with a pot of milk for his master. When he reached the village tank, he placed the milk under a Banyan Tree, had a wash from the tank, and took rest for a while. He fell asleep when he had the vision of a beautiful lady holding a baby in her arms. The lady approached him with a smile and asked for some milk for the baby. When that was given, the vision disappeared and the boy ran to his master, and narrated the incident. The master was surprised to find the pot full of milk even though a portion was given to the lady, and rushed to the village tank with the boy where he was able to see Virgin Mary and Jesus. On hearing this, the Christians of the place built a Church at the site. The tank described above is even today called "Our Lady's tank".

Another legend connected with this sanctuary is that a Portuguese merchant vessel, which was sailing to Ceylon early in the Seventeenth Century, was caught up in a storm. The helpless sailors knelt and prayed that if they were saved from the calamity, they would build a Church in honour of the Blessed Virgin wherever they landed safe. Their prayer was granted and they landed safe at Velankanni. Our Lady

appeared before them and directed them to the thatched Chapel built earlier. They prayed there. When they commenced fulfilling their vow, the Lady again appeared and indicated the site for the proposed Church. A permanent Chapel was thus built and one fine morning the sacred statue in the thatched Chapel was seen to have been installed in the newly built Church by some unknown hand. They attributed it to Our Lady Herself. Additions and improvements were made to this shrine ever since.

Not less than two lakhs devotees attend the annual festivals of the Church popularly known as the 'Feast', which takes place between the 29th of August and 8th September in honour of the Virgin Mary. The festivities start with the hoisting of a Marian Flag and the next nine days are known as '*Novena*'. Baptism is given to many on these days. The tenth day is known as the Feast-birth day of the Virgin Mary. The Bishop of Tanjore attends the festival every year. Also there is a grand torch-light procession on the last day of this festival when the statue of Mary is carried round in a car. In this procession, over two-hundred persons are required to draw the car which has high towers. The procession accompanies the car singing spiritual songs on 'Our Lady'. On the return of the procession, Our Lady is entertained to lovely and inspiring poetical recitations until the early hours of the morning.

A solemn High Mass and Sermon at 8 A.M. is the chief feature of the morning service. Hundreds make their confessions and receive Holy Communion. The very last ceremony takes place in the evening when Our Lady's Flag is brought down from the tall mast and placed on the High Altar. After incense, the officiating Priest reverently kisses it, followed by others. With last homage paid to the Heavenly Queen and Mother, devotees return.

There is a regular flow of pilgrims throughout the year. Those who cannot come personally send their offerings by post. Sometimes the offerings are placed in the hollow of a bamboo stick, both ends of which are sealed and then thrown into the

sea with the address of the shrine duly written on it. All these are said to arrive safely at the shrine and such articles are displayed in the presbytery.

The Church is under the control of the Bishop of Tanjore, who is appointed by the Arch-Diocese of Mylapore, Madras.

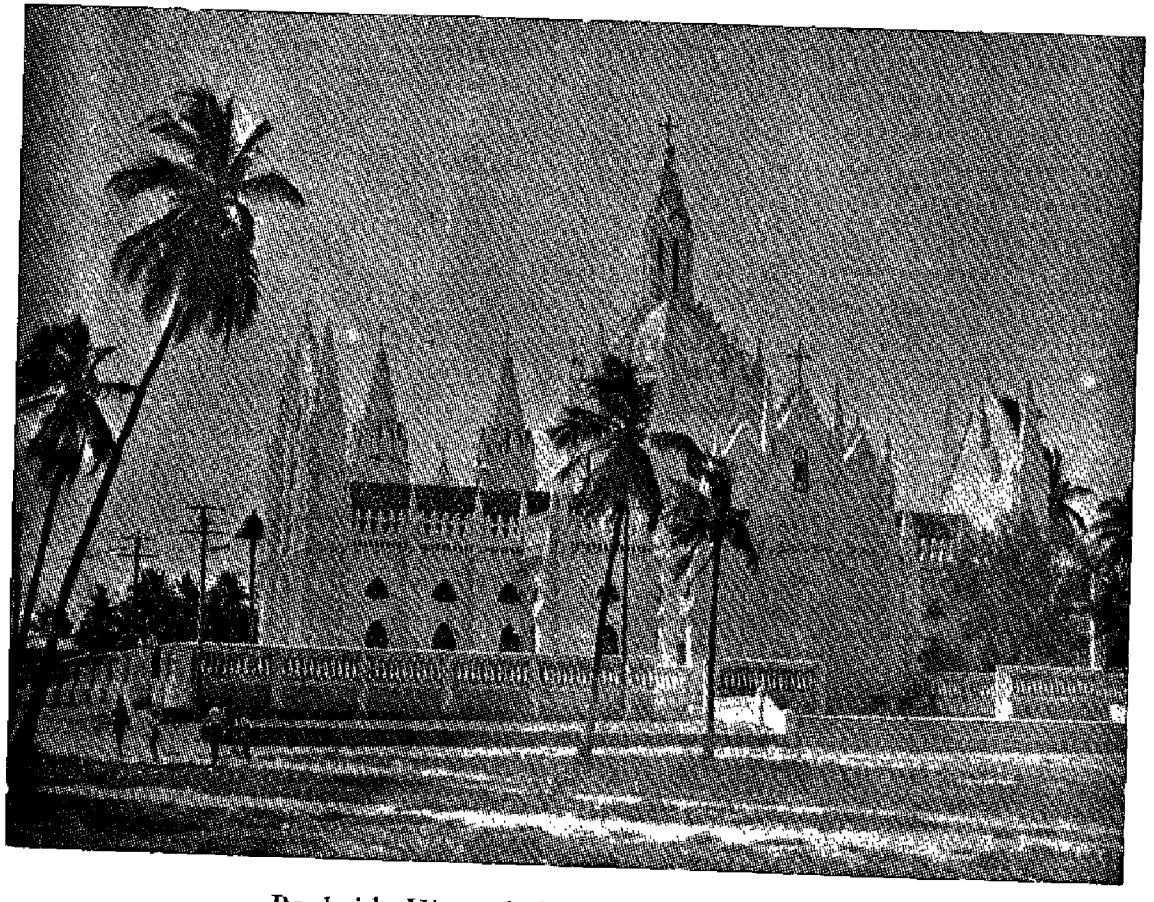
Thus the Basilica Church at Velankanni, though Christian in character, is a unique sanctuary in South India, attracting thousands of pilgrims without any distinction of cast or creed throughout the year, to offer worship to Virgin Mary, " Our Lady of Health ".

SAINT HAZARETH SYED SHAHUL QADIR WALI'S SHRINE

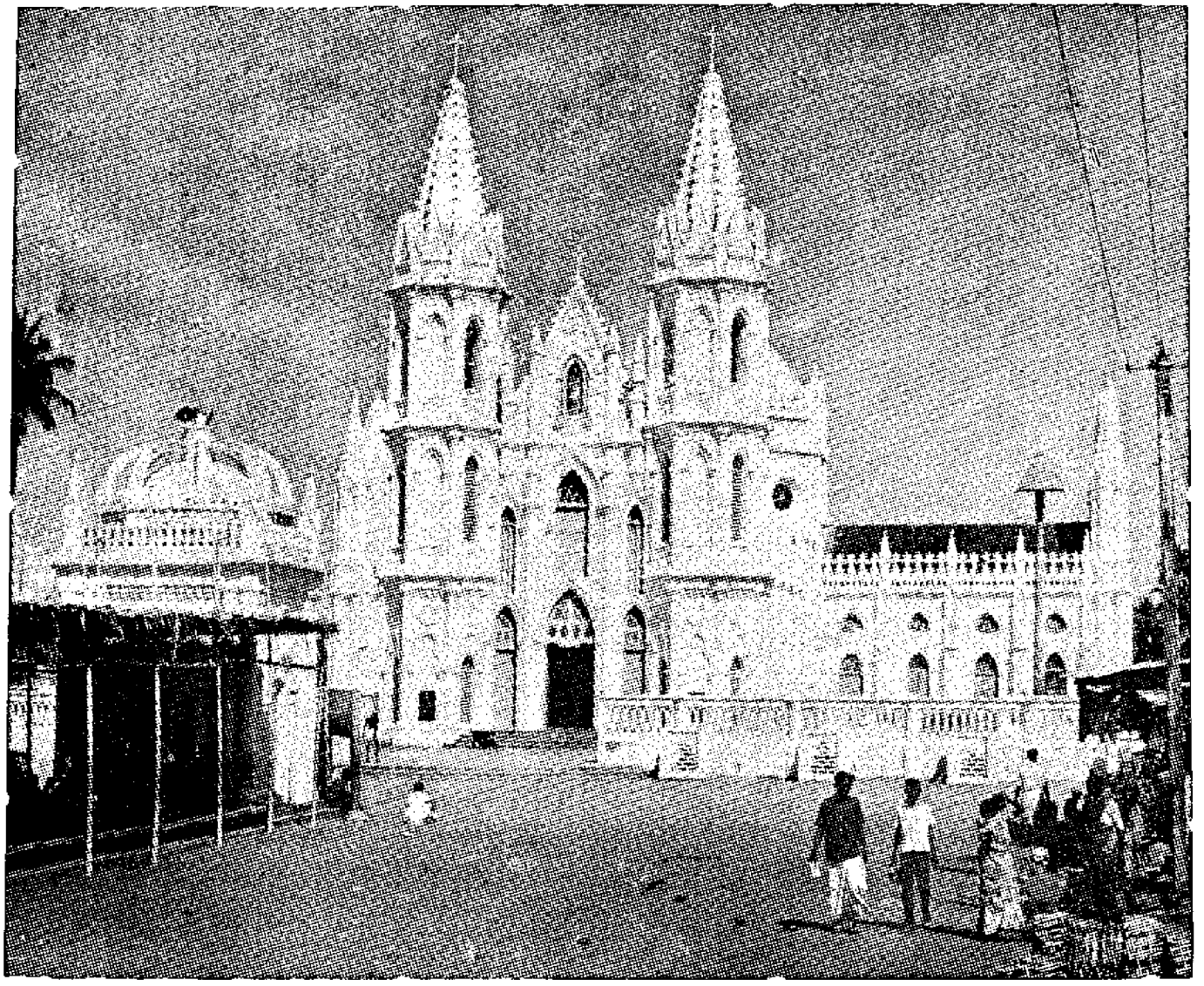
NAGORE

Nagore, a railway terminus on the Thanjavur—Nagore branch line of the Southern Railway is a suburb of the town of Nagapattinam. It is about six kilometres from Nagapattinam and possesses a unique history of its own. The place is well-known for the shrine (Darga) of Saint Hazareth Syed Shahul Hameed Qadir Wali, who is believed to shower His blessings profusely on devotees without any distinction of religion, caste, creed or colour. This Saint lived 400 years ago and his tomb (Darga) is said to have been revered by the Tanjore Rajas, who have contributed in building some of its minarets. The devotion and respect for the Saint as also tales about His miraculous deeds drew more and more devotees including members of the Hindu community who popularly called Him *Nagore Andavar* or the God of Nagore. His anniversary is celebrated in autumn i.e., during the first fourteen days of the month of Jamathul Akhir (September) and this festival attracts a large concourse of pilgrims and devotees from all over India as well as from far-off countries like Arabia, Burma, Ceylon etc. It is particularly significant in that a large number of Hindus too participate in the festival with great enthusiasm and devotion.

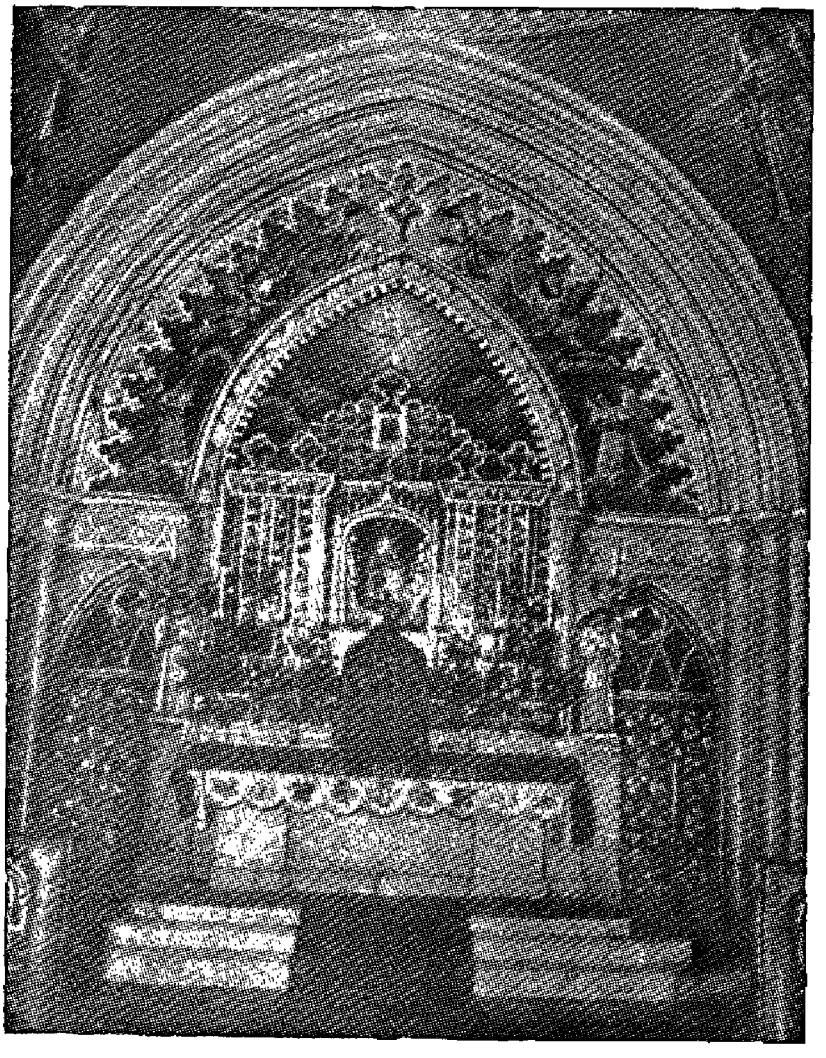
Legend has it that this famous Darga was built some 400 years ago, by the local Fishermen community and subsequently several extensions and additions were carried out to this edifice by various philanthropists. It covers an area of about 25 acres. It is an impressive white building of brick and plaster



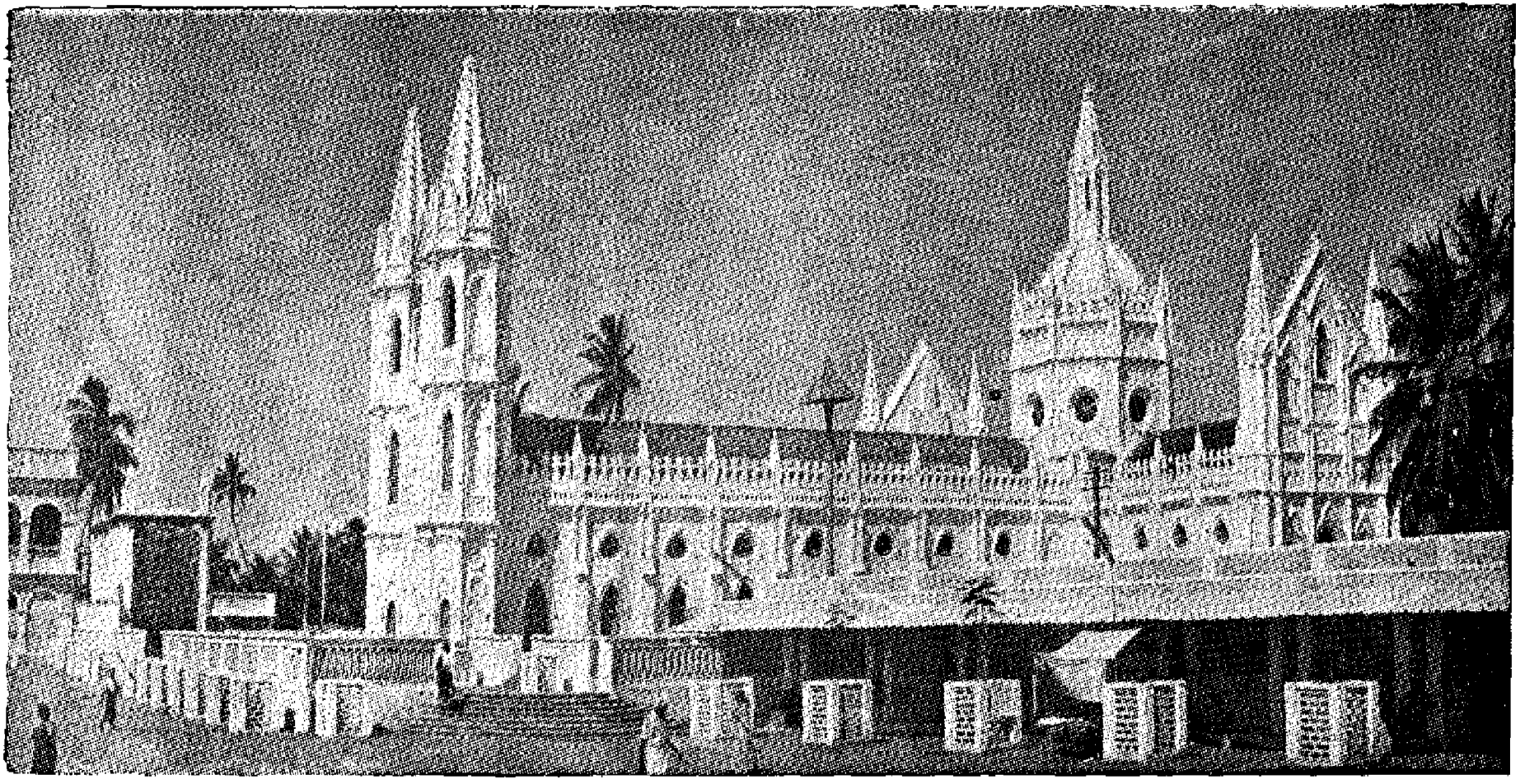
Backside View of the Velankanni Church,
Velankanni.



Front view of the Velankanni Church
Velankanni.



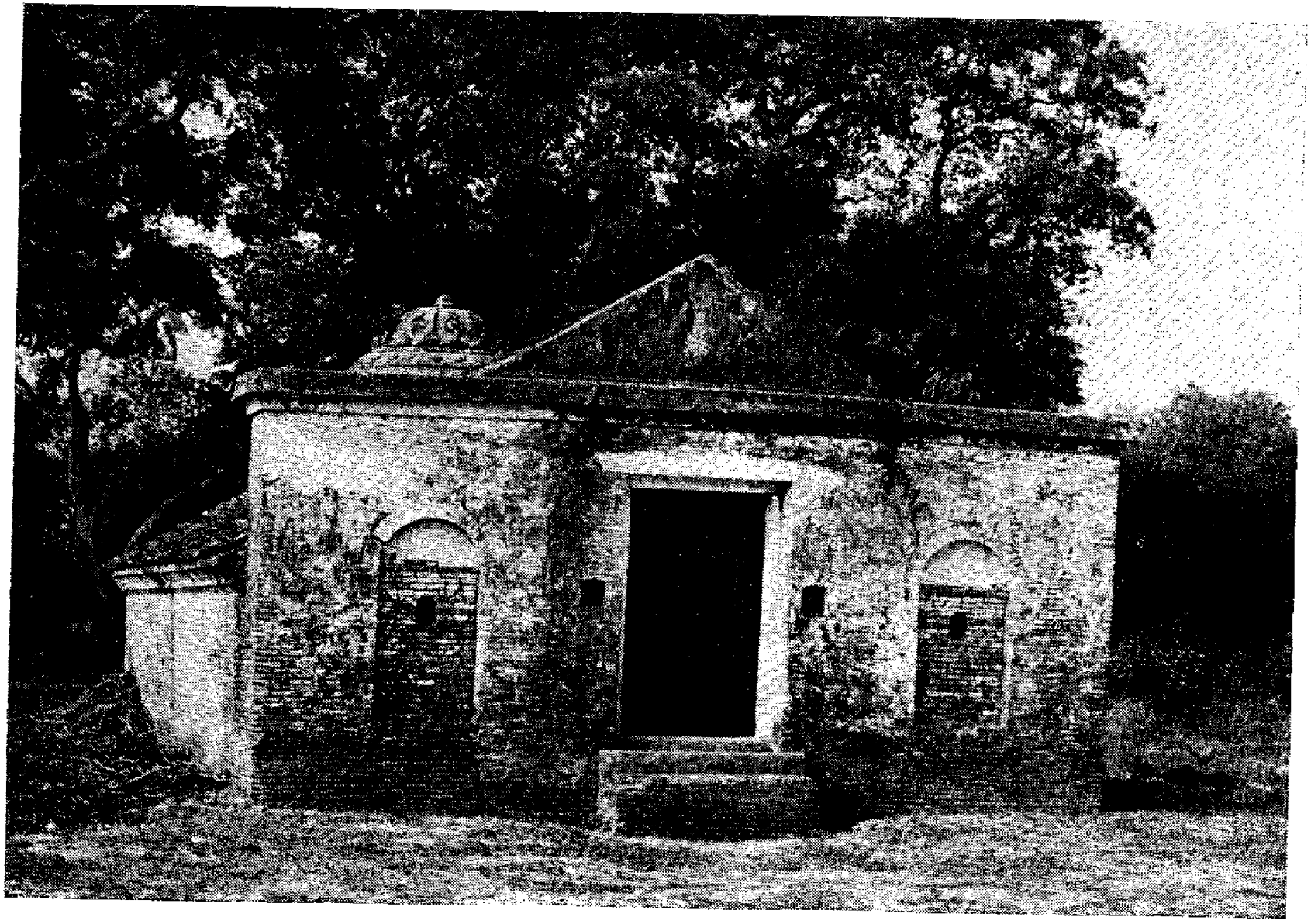
Inside Decorated Arch of Velankanni Deity
Velankanni.



A View of the Velankanni Church
Velankanni.

Deity of Velankanni Matha
Velankanni.

The Buddha statue with an inscription on its pedestal in The Rishi Koil.

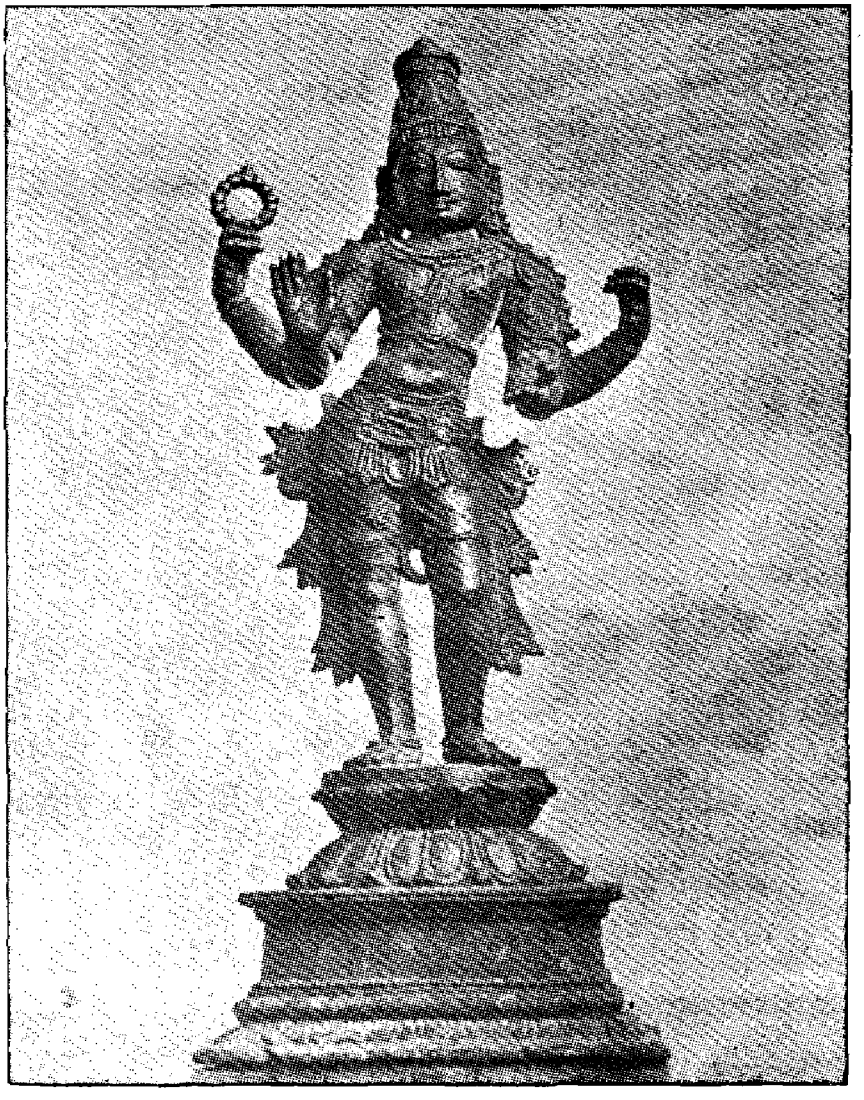


The Buddhist shrine at Perunjeri popularly called
" The Rishi Koil "

Maitreya (Standing) with copper gilt
Melaiyur, Sirkali Taluk
About 9th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

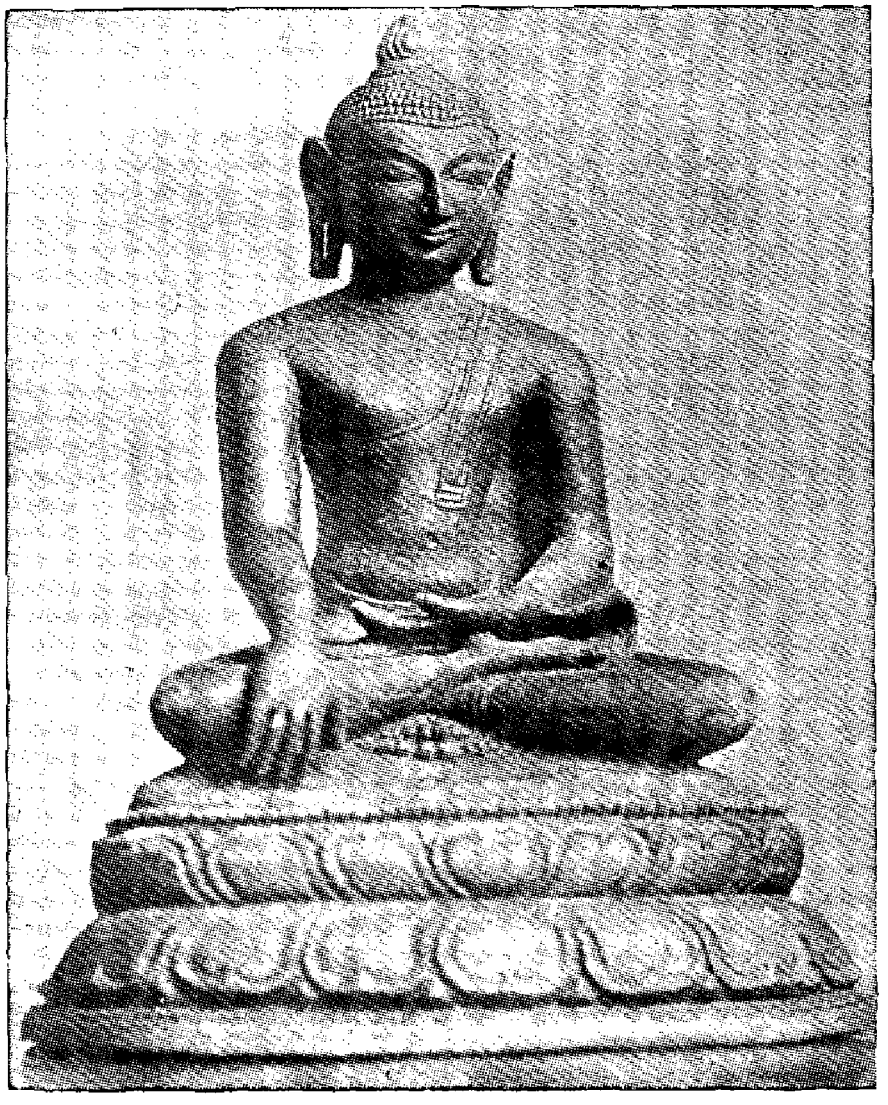
Buddha (Standing)
Nagapattinam
About 15th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

Buddha (Standing)
Nagapattinam
About 13th and 14th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.



Maitreya (Standing)
Nagapattinam
About 15th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

Buddha,
Nagapattinam.
About 10th and 11th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

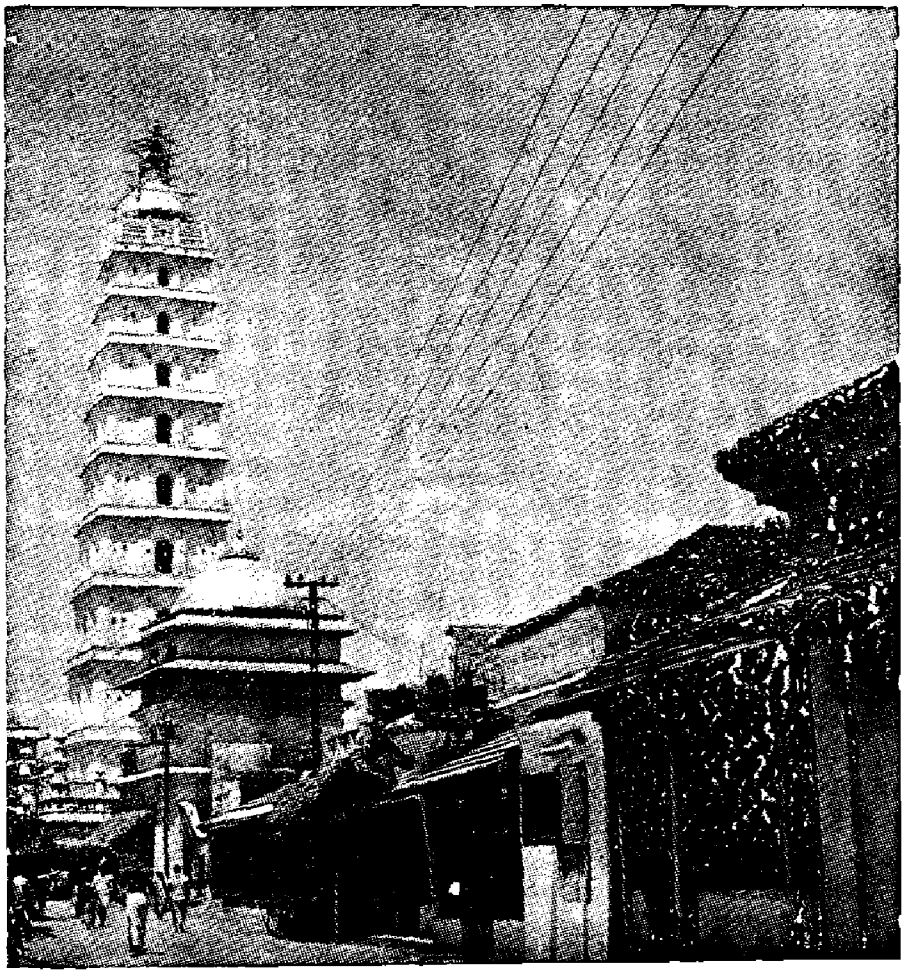


Buddha with pedestal (Seated)
Nagapattinam
About 10th and 11th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

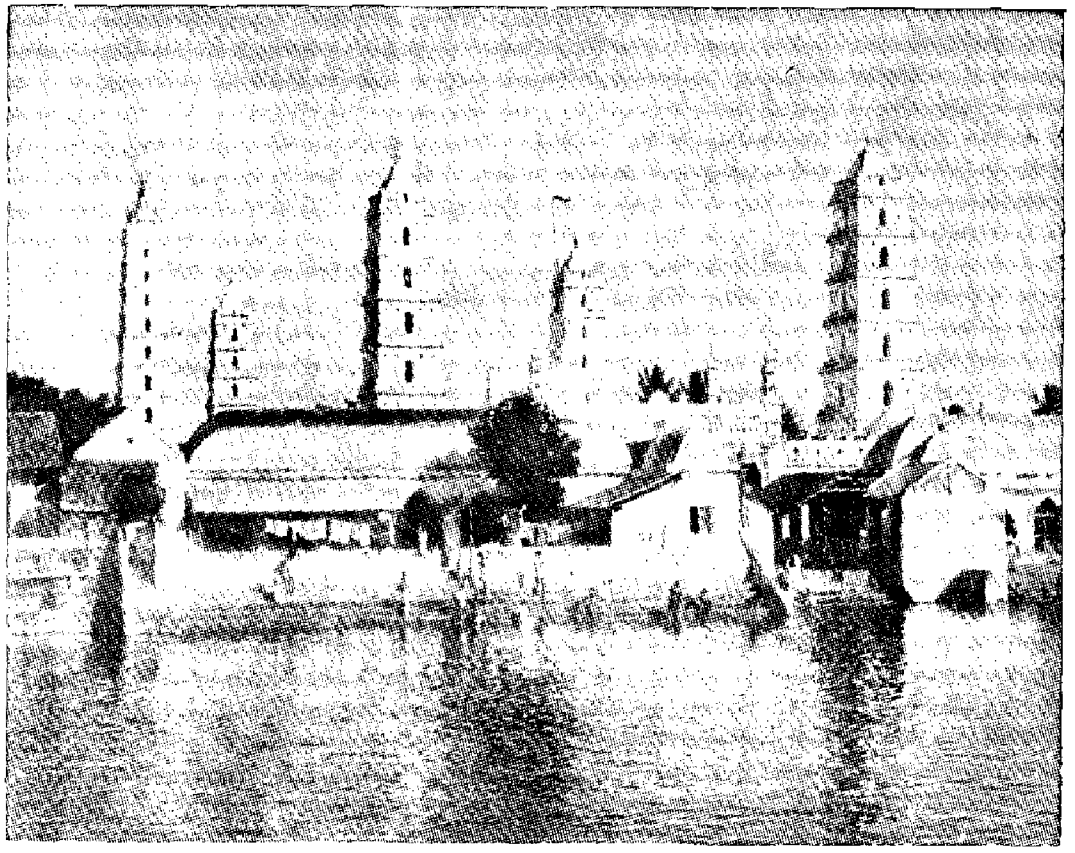
Jambhala and Vasudhara (Seated)
Nagapattinam.
About 11th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

Tara (Standing)
Nagapattinam
About 10th and 11th Century A. D.
Government Museum, Madras.

Dhyani Buddha-3 Numbers
Nagapattinam
Government Museum, Madras.

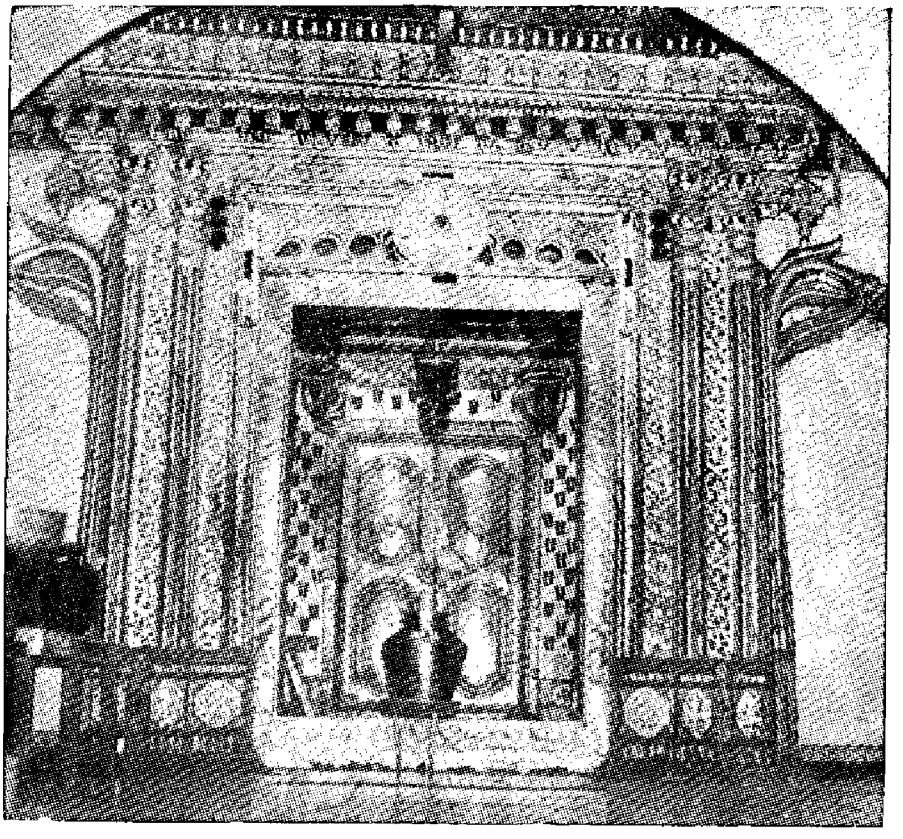


The Big Minaret in front of the Darga
Nagore.

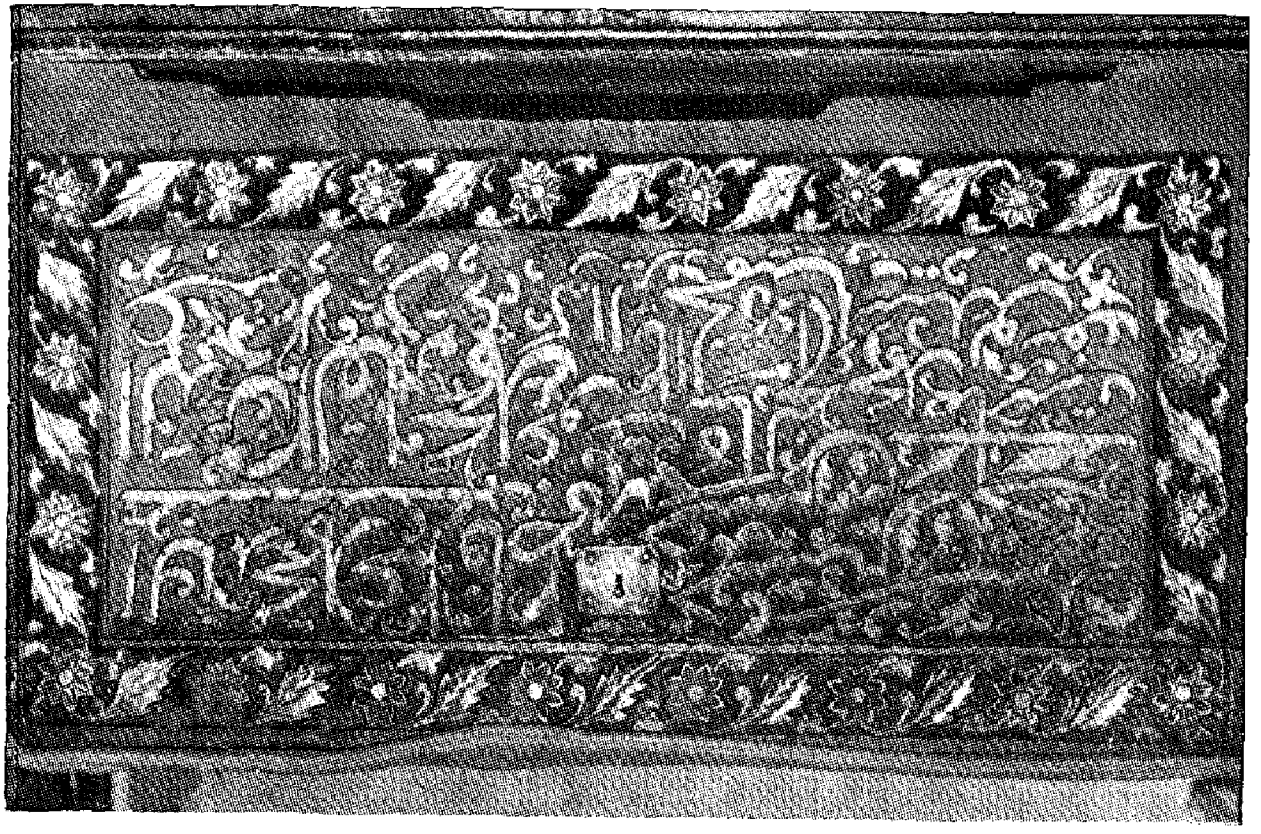


A view of the Nagore Darga
Nagore.

A View of the Darga at Nagore (from the Sea-Shore.)



The Golden Doors of Nagore Andavar Sannathi, Nagore.



The box containing the Cap, Stick and other articles
which were used by Nagore Andavar
Nagore.

and possesses five tall minarets, the largest of which is 90 feet high well known to seamen as a landmark. The big minaret in front of the Darga was built by Pratap Singh, Raja of Tanjore. His son Tuljaji Maharaja endowed the shrine with large extent of lands. There are two irregular cloistered courts and a central tomb within the Darga. The latter stands under a dome and is approached through seven doors all plated with silver.

Daily worship is offered by hereditary Sahebmars (priests) said to be the descendants of the Saint Nagore Andavar. On every Thursday, a large congregation of worshippers of all communities visit the Darga and make offerings to the Saint. The holy sandals of the Saint are preserved carefully in a silver box and exhibited to all the pilgrims. Vows are taken while offering worship in the Darga by Hindus.

The management of the Darga is vested in a Board of eight Hereditary Trustees, who are the lineal descendants of the Saint's miraculous son Hazareth Syed Mohammed Yusuff Saheb by primogeniture. The Darga owns lands to the extent of 5 acres of wet and 15 acres of dry lands, apart from as many as 100 shops and buildings. Its income from offerings alone is estimated to be Rs. 4·5 lakhs per annum. After meeting the expenses of the Darga, the surplus income derived from the lands and offerings is distributed among the six hundred and forty 'kasu pangudars', the descendants of the Saint's miraculous son.

This famous Saint Hazareth Syed Shahul Hameed Qadir Wali, to whom numerous miracles are attributed was born in Manickapur near Ayodhyah (Oudh) in the Uttar Pradesh, 400 years ago on a Friday, in the year 910 Hijra. His father was twenty-first lineal descendant of the Prophet of Islam. He grew up a supernatural child. At the age of eight, he is said to have mastered the Arabic language and was initiated into divine knowledge by Hazareth Syed Mohammed Ghouse Saheb of Gwalior. A few years after his training under this preceptor, he is said to have toured extensively with a part of 404 disciples in Afghanistan, Baluchistan etc., performing innumerable

miracles on the way by raising the dead, making the dumb speak, the lame walk and by curing all kinds of incurable diseases. On his way to Mecca in a Mosque at Lahore, he was met by one Kazi Hazareth Noordin Saheb, who approached him with a request to be blessed with a child. The request was granted subject to the condition that the eldest son should be dedicated to the Saint to be brought up as his own son. The blessing materialised and the first son was born. At the age of seven, this boy left for Mecca in response to a divine voice which said that he was wanted there by the Saint. After the boy joined him, the Saint undertook further travels propagating Islam. Lastly, he visited Tanjore and miraculously cured the then ruler of Tanjore, King Achuthappa Naik, who was afflicted by a grievous and prolonged malady. The King, in turn, gave him various presents. But he rejected them and accepted only the plot of land, on which the famous Darga is situated now. He stayed with his son at this place till his sixty-eighth year and when he died, he was buried in the place in accordance with the instructions given by him earlier. The Darga at Nagore also contains the tombs of his miraculous son and his wife.

The miracles attributed to the Saint during his life-time are many and these are said to have happened even after his disappearance from this mortal world. Several instances are narrated about restoration of sight to the blind, curing of incurable diseases, children being born to the childless and several other prayers of devotees having been granted. Devotees undertake various vows to get relief from their sufferings. Tonsure ceremony is performed here not only for children, but also by grown-up men. Some people undertake to sleep in the premises of the Darga for some nights, with a view to get the Saint's blessings to overcome their sufferings.

The anniversary of the Holy Saint is celebrated every year for fourteen days, commencing from the first day of the month of Jamathul Akhir, (September). The festival known as the "*Kandoori Festival*" attracts a huge crowd of about five lakhs of pilgrims who come from even foreign countries like Arabia, Ceylon, Burma etc.

The festival commences with the *Urus* or the flag-hoisting ceremony, which takes place at about 6-30 P.M. on the first day of the Jamathul Akhir month. On this day, flags are also hoisted on all the five minarets of the Darga. Traditional Muslim flags in green with symbol of the Crescent are brought in procession from Nagapattinam to Nagore in a replica of a decorated ship. During the period of the festival, a mass Jumma prayer is conducted on Fridays by the priest, who is dressed in the robe of the Arabian Muslim.

On the eighth day of the festival, there is a display of fireworks. The ninth day witnesses the installation of the "*Peer*" or '*Gnana Guru*' at about 10 P.M. During this function, a Fakir is made to sit motionless in the Darga and keeps vigil for three days. Numerous devotees flock to him on these days for obtaining amulets and lime from him, which are supposed to possess supernatural powers. The Tanjore Muslims have the right of choosing this Fakir and this Fakir is richly rewarded at the end of his performance.

The tenth day is the most important day. It is stated that some time after the death of the Saint, a devotee approached his son requesting permission to anoint the Saint's tomb with sandal paste. This request was granted and since then, anointing the Saint's tomb with Sandal paste has become an important item of the festival. The Sandal paste is brought from Nagapattinam in a procession. It is placed in a silver vessel and put in a tabooth (Chandanakoodu) which will be in the shape of a decorated temple car. The procession starts from Nagapattinam at 10 P.M. and reaches the Darga by about 4-30 A.M.

On the eleventh day, the 'Peer' who was installed on the ninth day is released from the bondage when he proceeds to a place on the seashore called the "Chilladi", where he stands for a while in a pit, offering prayers. It is believed that the water in the pit becomes sweet, so long as he remains there and after he leaves the place, it becomes saline. People flock together in large numbers to get a drop of this water and taste

it. On the twelfth and thirteenth days also, people gather in large numbers to offer their prayers. On the fourteenth day, the flags are dismounted from the minarets at 8-30 P.M. which marks the termination of the festival.

The Darga, like other important institutions of its kind in South India is visited during the festival by delegates from the Babayya Darga at Penukonda in the Anantapur District, who are received with due honours. The ceremony of the motionless Fakir appears to have been borrowed from the festival at Penukonda.

Though the Darga has been built by Muslims, it represents a unique place of worship in South India, since it is visited by Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike who muster in thousands all through the year, to offer worship to the Saint. Thus, this shrine can be held out as a typical example of integration where the common faith in God among members of different religious communitiss has forced them into one class 'devotees'.

ANNEXURE I

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF VILLAGES

THANJAVUR DISTRICT

1. SIRKALI TALUK

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Achalpuram.	Sri Sivaloga Thyagaraja-swamy temple.	2
Chayavanam H/O Melaiyur.	Sri Chayavaneswaraswamy temple.	40
Mahendrapalli.	Sri Thirumeni Azhageswarar temple.	1
Nangoor.	Sri Narayana Perumal temple.	30
Pallavaneswaram H/O Melaiyur.	Sri Pallavaneswaraswamy temple.	43
Sirkali.	Sri Sattanathaswamy temple.	9
Thirukkaragavoor.	Sri Velvidainathar temple.	18
Thirukkolakka H/O Sirkali.	Sri Thalapureeswarar temple.	15
Thirumayiladi.	Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	7
Thirumullaivasal.	Sri Mullaivananathaswamy temple.	17
Thirunagari.	Sri Kalyana Ranganathar temple.	28
Thiruppungur.	Sri Sivaloganathaswamy temple.	21
Thiruvengadu	Sri Swetharanyeswaraswamy temple.	32
Vaitheeswarankoil.	Sri Vaidhyanadhaswamy temple.	25

2. MAYURAM TALUK

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Anandathandavapuram.	Sri Panchanadiswarar temple.	81
Iluppapattu.	Sri Neelakandeswarar temple.	94
Karunkuyilnathanpettai.	Sri Sakthipureeswaraswamy temple.	88
Kondathur.	Sri Kannayiramudaiyar temple.	78
Konerirajapuram.	Sri Uma Maheswarar temple.	71
Korukkai.	Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	75
Kuttalam.	Sri Ukthavedheeswaraswamy temple.	106
Manakudi.	Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	112
Mayuram Town.	Sri Mayuranathaswamy temple.	53
Mayuram Town.	Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy temple.	58
Moovalur.	Sri Margasahayeswarar temple.	102
Nidur.	Sri Somanathaswamy etc temples.	83
Parasalur.	Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	100
Perambur.	Sri Subramaniaswamy temple.	91
Perumalkoil H/O Therazhundhur.	Sri Amaruviyappan temple.	46
Sembanarkoil.	Sri Swarnapureeswarar temple.	113
Thalainayar.	Sri Kutramporutheeswaraswamy temple.	96
Thirukkadaiyur.	Sri Amirthaghateswaraswamy temple.	63
Thiruninriyur.	Sri Lakshmipureeswaraswamy temple.	80

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page no.*
Thiruvaduthurai.	Sri Gomuktheeswarar temple.	68
Thiruvalapputhur.	Sri Rathnapureeswarar temple.	73
Thiruvilandur.	Sri Parimala Ranganathaswamy temple.	85
Vallalarkoil H/O Mayuram.	Sri Vadhanyeswaraswamy temple.	49
Vazhuvur.	Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple	59
Vilanagar.	Sri Thurai Kattum vallalar temple.	89

3. KUMBAKONAM TALUK

Aduthurai (Natarajapuram).	Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy temple.	161
Bhaskararajapuram H/O Koothanur.	Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy temple.	155
Darasuram.	Sri Airavatheeswarar temple.	181
Eraharam.	Sri Skandhanathaswamy temple.	174
Injikollai.	Sri Gnanapureeswarar temple.	203
Innambur.	Sri Akshayapureeswaraswamy temple.	173
Kanjanur.	Sri Agniswaraswamy temple.	160
Karkudi H/O Marudanallur.	Sri Karkudinathaswamy temple.	184
Kizhapazhayarai.	Sri Somanathaswamy temple.	191
Koranadu Karuppur.	Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	176
Kumbakonam.	Sri Adhikumbeswaraswamy temple.	117
do.	Sri Chakrapaniswamy temple.	132
do.	Sri Gouthameswaraswamy temple.	136

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Kumbakonam.	Sri Kasi Viswanathaswamy temple.	133
do.	Sri Nageswaraswamy temple.	127
do.	Sri Ramaswamy temple.	126
do.	Sri Sarangapaniswamy temple.	121
do.	Sri Somanathaswamy alias Banapureeswarar temple.	134
do.	Sri Someswaraswamy temple.	135
do.	Sri Vedhanarayana Perumal & Varadaraja Perumal temple.	137
Nachiarkoil.	Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple.	188
Nallur.	Sri Palasavaneswaraswamy temple.	202
Oppiliappan Kovil.	Sri Venkatachalapathy Devasthanam	146
Pandanallur.	Sri Pasupatheeswarar and Adhikesava Perumal temples.	148
Patteeswaram.	Sri Dhenupureeswarar temple.	194
Senganur.	Sri Sakthigireeswaraswamy temple.	153
Suriyanarkovil.	Sri Suriyanarayanaswamy temple.	158
Swamimalai	Sri Swaminathaswamy temple.	139
Thirubhuvanam.	Sri Kampahareswaraswamy temple.	165
Thiruchchathimutram	Sri Sakthivaneswaraswamy temple.	198
Thirucherai.	Sri Saranatha Perumal temple.	200
Thirukalayanallur (Sakkottai).	Sri Amirthakalasanathar temple.	183
Thirukodikaval H/O. Koothanur.	Sri Thirukodiswaraswamy temple.	156

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page no.*
Thirumangalakudi.	Sri Prananathaswamy temple.	157
Thirunageswaram.	Sri Nageswaraswamy temple.	177
Thirunallur.	Sri Kalyana Sundareswaraswamy temple.	169
Thirunaraiyur.	Sri Siddhanathaswamy temple.	185
Thiruneelakudi.	Sri Manogyanathaswamy temple.	179
Thiruppanthurai.	Sri Pranaveswaraswamy temple.	190
Thiruppurambayam.	Sri Sakshinathaswamy temple.	171
Thiruvalanchuli.	Sri Swedha Vinayagar temple	142
do.	Sri Soundararaja Perumal temple.	145
Thiruvidaimarudhur.	Sri Mahalingaswamy temple.	162
Thiruvisalur.	Sri Karkadeswaraswamy temple.	168
Tiruloki.	Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	154
Tiruppanandhal.	Sri Arunajadeswaraswamy temple.	150
do.	Sri Veeriamman temple.	151
Vellalarkoil.	Sri Dharmapureeswaraswamy temple.	182

4. NANNILAM TALUK

Ambal.	Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy temple.	239
Engan.	Sri Subramanyaswamy temple.	249
Keeranur.	Sri Sivaloganathaswamy temple.	228
Kodavasal.	Sri Koneswaraswamy temple.	243
Koothanur.	Sri Saraswathiambal temple. (Private temple).	220
Nannilam.	Sri Madhuvaneswarar temple.	205

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page no.*
Peralam.	Sri Swayambunathaswamy temple.	231
Seeyathamangai (H/o Seshamoolai).	Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy temple.	210
Sirupuliyur.	Sri Kripasamudra Perumal temple.	229
Sri Vanjiyam.	Sri Vanjinathaswamy temple.	215
Thiruchchenkattangudi.	Sri Uthirapatheeswaraswamy temple.	213
Thirukalambur (Thirukkollampudhur).	Sri Vilvaranyeswaraswamy temple.	245
Thirukkannamangai.	Sri Bakthavathsala Perumal temple.	246
Thirukkannapuram.	Sri Sowriraja Perumal temple.	221
Thirukondeeswaram.	Sri Pasupatheeswaraswamy temple.	218
Thirumarugal.	Sri Rathnagireeswarar temple.	226
Thiruppanaiyur (Vadagarai Vattam).	Sri Soundareswaraswamy temple.	240
Thiruppayathangudi.	Sri Thiruppayathanathaswamy temple.	224
Thirupperugavalur (H/O Manakkal).	Sri Abimuktheeswarar temple.	248
Thiruppugalur.	Sri Agneeswaraswamy temple.	207
Thiruvirkudi.	Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	241
Thiruvizhimalai.	Sri Vizhinathaswamy temple.	232
Vadagudi.	Sri Mahalingaswamy temple.	237

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
	5. PAPANASAM TALUK	
Alangudi	Sri Abathsagayeswaraswamy temple.	256
Avoor.	Sri Pasupatheeswaraswamy temple.	258
Mela Kapisthalam.	Sri Gajendra Varadaraja Perumal temple.	263
Nallur.	Sri Kalyana Sundareswarar and Adhi Kesava Perumal temple.	259
Papanasam.	Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple.	265
Papanasam (Thirupalaithurai).	Sri Palaivananathaswamy temple.	268
Papanasam (Vangarampettai).	Sri Ramalingaswamy temple.	267
Perumalkoil.	Sri Jagathrakshaka Perumal temple.	264
Puthur H/o Ammapettai.	Sri Putridankondeswarar temple.	269
Thirukkarugavur.	Sri Mullaivananathar and Varadaraja Perumal temple.	254
Thyagasamudram.	Sri Valvil Ramaswamy temple.	262
	6. THANJAVUR TALUK	
Kandiyur.	Sri Brahma Sirakandeeswaraswamy temple.	303
do.	Sri Harasaba Vimochana Perumal temple.	304
Koviladi.	Sri Appala Ranganathaswamy and Divyagnaneswarar temples.	294
Melathiruppoonthuruthi.	Sri Pushpavaneswaraswamy temple.	305
Nemam.	Sri Ayravatheeswaraswamy temple.	296

Name of vllage	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Punnainallur.	Sri Mariamman temple.	284
Senthalai H/O Mannar Samudram.	Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple.	299
Thanjavur.	Sri Bangaru Kamakshiamman temple.	283
do.	Sri Brahadeeswarar temple.	274
Thiruchchotruthurai.	Sri Odhavaneswaraswamy temple.	301
Thirukkanurpatti.	Sri Karumbeswarar temple.	306
Thiruvaiyaru.	Sri Panchanadheeswaraswamy temple.	287
Tirukkattuppalli.	Sri Agneeswaraswamy temple.	297
Tiruvedikudi.	Sri Vedhapureeswaraswamy temple.	302

7. ORATHANAD TALUK

Kovilur.	Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy temple.	311
Mukthambalpuram (H/O Orathanad).	Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy temple.	314
Paruthiapparkoil (H/O Keela Ulur).	Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy temple.	312

8. MANNARGUDI TALUK

Kottur.	Sri Kolundeeswaraswamy temple.	338
Mannargudi.	Sri Rajagopalaswamy temple.	326
Mannargudi.	Sri Chockanathaswamy and Meenakshiamman temple.	329

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Mullavasal H/O Perambur.	Sri Mullavaneswarar temple.	320
Needamangalam.	Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy temple.	317
do.	Sri Santhana Ramaswamy temple.	318
Pampani H/O Mannargudi.	Sri Naganathaswamy temple.	333
Poovanur.	Sri Chathuranga Vallabanathaswamy temple.	321
Ramapuram H/O Mannargudi.	Sri Jayamkondanathaswamy temple.	331
Thirukkalar.	Sri Parijathavaneswarar temple.	343
Thirumakkottai	Sri Gnanapureeswaraswamy temple.	339
do.	Sri Ranganatha perumal temple.	341
Thirunellikkaval H/O Seruvambi.	Sri Nellivananathaswamy temple.	335
Tirunattiyathangudy H/O Palakkurichi.	Sri Rathnapureeswaraswamy temple.	334
Vaduvur Agraharam.	Sri Kothandaramaswamy temple.	323

9. NAGAPATTINAM TALUK

Ettukudi.	Sri Subramaniaswamy temple.	377
Kivalur.	Sri Akshayalingaswamy temple.	357
Kovil Kadambanur H/O Agarakkadambanur.	Sri Kailasanathaswamy temple.	369
Nagapattinam.	Sri Meikandamoorthy temple.	362
do.	Sri Kayaroganaswamy & Neelayadakshi Amman temple.	363
do.	Sri Soundararaja Perumal temple.	367

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Sembianmadevi.	Sri Kailasanathaswamy temple.	360
Sikkal.	Sri Navaneetheswaraswamy temple.	354
Thirukkuvalai.	Sri Thyagarajaswamy temple.	374
Thiruneiperu	Sri Vanmikanathaswamy temple.	371
Thiruvalivalam.	Sri Hirudaya Kamalanathar temple.	372
Thiruvarur.	Sri Thyagarajaswamy temple.	347
Thiruvoimur.	Sri Thyagarajaswamy temple.	379
	10. THIRUTHURAIPOONDI TALUK	
Idumbavanam.	Sri Sathgunanathar temple.	401
Kachanam.	Sri Kaichinneswaraswamy temple.	383
Kovilur H/O Vadagadu.	Sri Manthrapureeswaraswamy temple.	385
Thagattur.	Sri Bairavanathaswamy temple.	399
Thillaivilagam.	Sri Veera Kothandarama Perumal temple.	389
Thiruthuraipoondi.	Sri Bava Oushadhapureeswaraswamy temple.	396
Vadugur.	Sri Oushadheeswaraswamy temple.	397
Vedharanyam.	Sri Vedharanyaswamy temple.	391
	11. PATTUKKOTTAI TALUK	
Adiramapattinam.	Sri Abhaya Varadheswaraswamy temple.	406
Athalore (Peravurani).	Sri Veeramahali Amman temple.	414
Nagaram.	Sri Balasubramaniaswamy temple.	413

Name of village	*Name of temple*	*Page No.*
Parakkalakottai.	Sri Madhyapureeswaraswamy temple.	415
Pattukkottai.	Sri Nadiamman temple.	411
Perumagalore.	Sri Somanathaswamy temple.	408
Thamarankottai.	Sri Balasubramaniaswamy temple.	416
do.	Sri Kanteeswaraswamy temple.	418
Thiruchchitrambalam.	Sri Purathana Vaneswaraswamy temple.	409

12. ARANTANGI TALUK

Avadayarkoil.	Sri Athmanathaswamy temple.	421
Thiruppunnaivasal.	Sri Viruthapureeswarar temple.	429
Vilanoor.	Sri Pambani Ambigai temple.	428

ANNEXURE II

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF TEMPLES

THANJAVUR DISTRICT

1. SIRKALI TALUK

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Chayavaneswaraswamy temple.	Chayavanam H/O Melaiyur.	40
Sri Kalyana Ranganathaswamy temple.	Thirunagari.	28
Sri Mullaivananathaswamy temple.	Thirumullaivasal.	17
Sri Narayana Perumal temple.	Nangoor.	30
Sri Pallavaneswarar temple.	Pallavaneswaram H/O Melaiyur.	43
Sri Sattanathaswamy temple.	Sirkali.	9
Sri Sivaloganathaswamy temple.	Thiruppungur.	21
Sri Sivaloga Thyagarajaswamy temple.	Achalpuram.	2
Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	Thirumayiladi.	7
Sri Swetharanyeswaraswamy temple.	Thiruvengadu.	32
Sri Thalapureeswarar temple.	Thirukkolakka H/O Sirkali.	15
Sri Thirumeni Azhageswarar temple.	Mahendrapalli.	1
Sri Vaidyanadhaswamy temple	Vaitheeswarankoil.	25
Sri Velvidainathaswamy temple.	Thirukaragavur.	18

2. MAYURAM TALUK

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Amaruviyappan temple.	Therazhundur	46
Sri Amirthaghateswaraswamy temple.	Thirukkadaiyur.	63
Sri Gomuktheeswarar temple.	Thiruvaduthurai.	68
Sri Kannayiramudaiyar temple.	Kondathur.	78
Sri Kasiviswanathaswamy temple.	Mayuram Town.	58
Sri Kutramporutheeswaraswamy temple.	Thalainayar.	96
Sri Lakshmipureeswaraswamy temple.	Thiruninriyur.	80
Sri Margasahayeswarar temple.	Moovalur.	102
Sri Mayuranathaswamy temple.	Mayuram Town.	53
Sri Neelakandeswarar temple.	Iluppapattu.	94
Sri Panchanadiswarar temple.	Ananda Thandavapuram	81
Sri Parimala Ranganathaswamy temple.	Thiruvilandur.	85
Sri Rathnapureeswarar temple.	Thiruvalapputhur.	73
Sri Sakthipureeswaraswamy temple.	Karunkuyil Nathan-pettai.	88
Sri Somanathaswamy etc., temples.	Nidur.	83
Sri Subramaniaswamy temple.	Perambur.	91
Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	Manakudi.	112
Sri Swarnapureeswarar temple.	Sembanarkoil.	113
Sri Thurai Kattum Vallalar temple.	Vilanagar.	89
Sri Ukthavedheeswaraswamy temple.	Kuttalam.	106

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Uma Maheswarar temple.	Konerirajapuram.	71
Sri Vadhanyeswaraswamy temple.	Vallalar Koil H/O Mayuram.	49
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	Korukkai.	75
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	Parasalur.	100
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	Vazhuvur.	59

3. KUMBAKONAM TALUK

Sri Abathsahayeswaraswamy temple.	Aduthurai (Natarajapuram)	161
Sri Adhi Kumbeswaraswamy temple	Kumbakonam	117
Sri Agniswaraswamy temple.	Kanjanur.	160
Sri Akshayapureeswaraswamy temple.	Innambur.	173
Sri Amirthakalasanathar temple.	Thirukkalayananallur. (Sakkottai)	183
Sri Arunajadeswaraswamy temple.	Tiruppanandhal.	150
Sri Airavatheeswarar temple.	Darasuram.	181
Sri Bhaskareswaraswamy temple.	Bhaskararajapuram H/O Koothanur.	155
Sri Chakrapaniswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	132
Sri Dharmapureeswaraswamy temple.	Vellalarkoil.	182
Sri Dhenupureeswarar temple.	Patteeswaram.	194
Sri Gnanapureeswarar temple.	Injikollai.	203
Sri Gouthameswaraswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	136
Sri Kalyanasundareswaraswamy temple.	Thirunallur.	169

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Kampahareswaraswamy temple.	Thirubhuvanam.	165
Sri Karkadeswaraswamy temple.	Thirvisalur.	168
Sri Karkudinathaswamy temple.	Karkudi H/O Marudhanallur.	184
Sri KasiViswanathaswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	133
Sri Mahalingaswamy temple.	Thiruvidaimarudhur.	162
Sri Manogyanathaswamy temple.	Thiruneelakkudi.	179
Sri Nageswaraswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	127
Sri Nageswaraswamy temple.	Thirunageswaram.	177
Sri Palasavaneswaraswamy temple.	Nallur.	202
Sri Pasupatheeswarar and Adhikesava Perumal temples.	Pandanallur.	148
Sri Prananathaswamy temple.	Thirumangalakudi.	157
Sri Pranaveswaraswamy temple.	Thiruppanthurai.	190
Sri Ramaswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	126
Sri Sakshinathaswamy temple.	Thiruppurambayam.	171
Sri Sakthigireeswaraswamy temple.	Senganur.	153
Sri Sakthivaneswaraswamy temple.	Thiruchchathimutram.	198
Sri Saranatha Perumal temple.	Thirucherai.	200
Sri Sarangapaniswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	121
Sri Siddhanathaswamy temple.	Thirunaraiyur.	185
Sri Skandhanathaswamy temple.	Eraharam.	174
Sri Somanathaswamy temple.	Kizhapazhayarai.	191
Sri Somanathaswamy alias Banapureeswarar temple.	Kumbakonam.	134

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Someswaraswamy temple.	Kumbakonam.	135
Sri Soundararaja Perumal temple.	Thiruvalanchuli.	145
Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple.	NachiyarKoil.	188
Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	Koranadu Karuppur.	176
Sri Sundareswaraswamy temple.	Tiruloki.	154
Sri Suriyanarayanaswamy temple.	Suriyanar Kovil.	158
Sri Swaminathaswamy temple.	Swamimalai.	139
Sri Swedha Vinayagar temple.	Thiruvalanchuli.	142
Sri Thirukodiswaraswamy temple.	Thirukodikaval H/o Koothanur.	156
Sri Vedanarayana Perumal & Varadaraja Perumal temple.	Kumbakonam.	137
Sri Veeriamman temple.	Tiruppanandhal.	151
Sri Venkatachalapathy Devasthanam.	Oppiliappan Kovil.	146

4. NANNILAM TALUK

Sri Abimuktheeswarar temple.	Thiruperugavalur H/o Manakkal.	218
Sri Agneeswaraswamy temple.	Thiruppugalur	207
Sri Bakthavathsala Perumal temple.	Thirukkannamangai.	246
Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy temple.	Ambal.	239
Sri Brahmapureeswaraswamy temple.	Seeyathamangai H/o Seshamoolai.	210
Sri Koneswaraswamy temple.	Kodavasal.	243
Sri Kripasamudra Perumal temple.	Sirupuliyur.	229
Sri Madhuvaneswarar temple.	Nannilam.	205

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Mahalingaswamy temple.	Vadagudi.	237
Sri Pasupatheeswaraswamy temple.	Thirukondeeswaram	218
Sri Rathnagireeswarar temple.	Thirumarugal.	226
Sri Saraswathiambal temple.	Koothanur.	220
Sri Sivaloganathaswamy temple.	Keeranoor.	228
Sri Soundareswaraswamy temple.	Thiruppanaiyur (Vadagarai Vattam.)	240
Sri Sowriraja Perumal temple.	Thirukkannapuram.	221
Sri Subramanyaswamy temple.	Engan.	249
Sri Swayambunathaswamy temple.	Peralam	231
Sri Thiruppayathanathaswamy temple.	Thiruppayathangudi.	224
Sri Uthirapatheeswaraswamy temple.	Thiruchchenkattankudi.	213
Sri Vanjinathaswamy temple.	Srivanjiyam.	215
Sri Veeratteswaraswamy temple.	Thiruvirkudi.	241
Sri Vilvaranyeswaraswamy temple.	Thirukalambur (Thirukkollampudur.)	245
Sri Vizhinathaswamy temple.	Thiruvizhimalai.	232

5. PAPANASAM TALUK

Sri Abathsagayeswaraswamy temple.	Alangudi.	256
Sri Gajendra Varadaraja Perumal temple.	Mela Kapisthalam.	263
Sri Jagathrakshaka Perumal temple.	Perumalkoil.	264
Sri Kalyanasundareswarar and Adhi Kesava Perumal temple.	Nallur.	259

Name of temple	*Name of village*	*Page No.*
Sri Mullaivananathar and Varadaraja Perumal temple.	Thirukkarugavur.	254
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THANJAVUR DISTRICT

Places having Important Temples

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